



spotlight on VET

# BULGARIA

## VET in Bulgaria

The Ministry of Education and Science coordinates national policy on vocational education and training (VET). Sports and culture ministries are in charge of VET schools in the respective study fields. The VET act defines two target groups: school-age learners and adults (16+ not in formal education and training). Young people may enrol in VET from age 13.

Recent legislation – a new pre-school and school education act (2015) and amendments to the VET act (2016) – rearranged the VET school network and increased the share of work-based learning in VET.

The main VET providers are schools: vocational gymnasiums, art and sports schools, VET colleges and private and public (State or municipal) licensed vocational training centres. State educational standards specify the content of VET qualifications. The legal framework distinguishes six types of initial and continuing VET (IVET and CVET) programmes, defines age and entry requirements, and regulates content and duration.

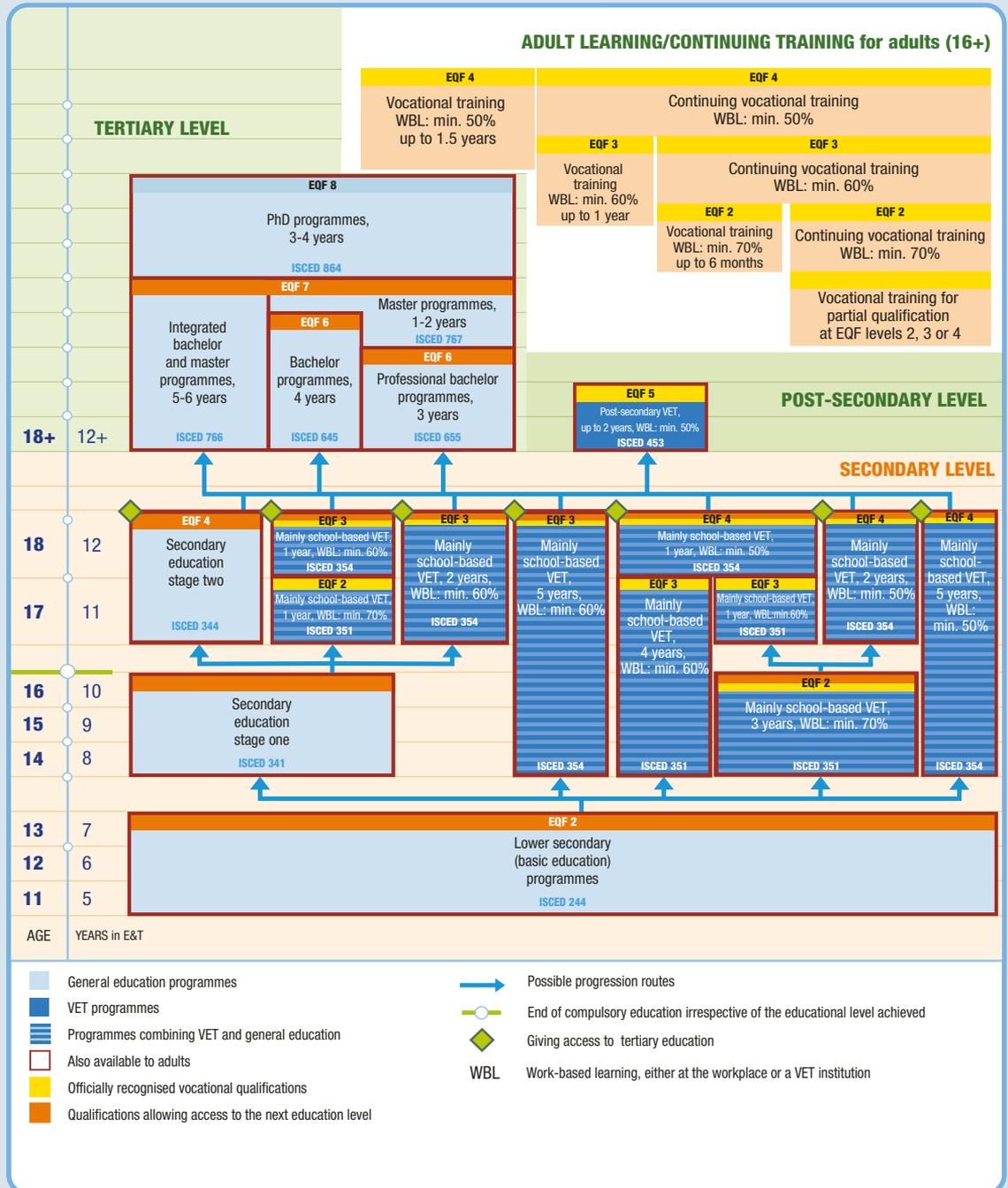
- A (A): IVET programmes leading to EQF level 2 qualifications at schools and training centres. For school-age learners they last one or three years; for adults up to six months.
- B (B): IVET and CVET programmes leading to EQF levels 3 (one or four years) and 4 (for adults – up to one and a half years) at schools and training centres.
- C (B): IVET and CVET programmes leading to EQF level 3 and 4 qualifications at VET schools. Their duration is one to five years and they give access to higher education provided learners complete the general education part of the programme.
- D (F): IVET and CVET programmes for adults leading to qualifications at EQF level 5 at VET schools and colleges with a maximum duration of two years.
- E (D): up to one-year IVET and CVET programmes leading to partial qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4 at schools and training centres.
- F (E): CVET programmes for adults leading to partial qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4 at schools and training centres. Their duration is not defined by the framework.

VET programmes for school-age learners have a vocational and a general part and graduates acquire qualifications for both: for example, a secondary education certificate and a vocational qualification such as car mechanic at EQF level 3. VET programmes provided by training centres and colleges for adults do not include a general education part and lead to a VET qualification only. VET qualifications can also be acquired through validation of prior learning. Just like school-age learners in VET programmes, those seeking validation must pass a State exam.

Work-based learning forms a substantial part (50% to 70% or more) of all VET programmes. Most is offered by schools, with the share of work-based learning decreasing with the programme level. Since 2014, dual VET has started to evolve. Practical training in a company alternates with periods of theory in a school or another VET provider. School-age learners are trained by companies at least two to three days per week in the final grades (11 and 12). Apprenticeship for adults commonly complements on-the-job training with self-study or evening classes to acquire vocational theory. Both school-age learners and adults receive remuneration from the employer. While legislation encourages dual VET, its implementation is still mostly project-based.

Social partners have a role in VET at several levels. They participate in the economic and social council, as well as other national councils to help shape VET policy. Employers are actively involved in designing and updating State educational standards, a process coordinated by the National Agency for VET. Representatives from employers' organisations and trade unions are members of examination boards set up by VET providers.

# VET in Bulgaria's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Bulgaria.

## Distinctive features of VET

VET is provided at secondary and post-secondary (non-tertiary) levels. There are more learners in VET compared with general education: 51.7% of the total secondary education population in 2017, though this has decreased from 52.5% in 2012. Secondary general education schools may also open VET classes by a special order of the Education Minister. This option is popular in small towns and rural areas.

Since 2016/17, secondary education has been offered in two stages. This improves access to VET, as learners may now choose their education path also after completing grade 10.

In the national context, the term initial VET is only used to refer to programmes leading learners to their first qualification, such as textile worker qualification at EQF levels 2 or its part. VET programmes are pursued afterwards; for example, textile production operator and textile technician qualifications at EQF level 3 and 4 are considered continuing VET.

According to the pre-school and school education act and the VET act, the acquisition of vocational qualifications is regulated by State educational standards. These standards exist for most VET qualifications. VET qualifications at all levels (EQF 2 to 5) are learning outcomes-based. Following the European credit system for VET (ECVET) principles, recent qualifications comprise units of learning outcomes, although a credit system is not yet fully established.

The legal basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning in VET has been in place since 2015 and procedures and quality assurance criteria have been developed. Implementation of the Bulgarian qualifications framework will ease putting validation arrangements in place.

## Challenges and policy responses

To make VET more responsive to labour market needs, the pre-school and school education act (2015), which covers VET, increased the responsibility of local and regional authorities. The reform increased their role in planning VET intake and defining occupations, funding staff salaries, organising vocational training for the unemployed, and equipping VET schools. Employer organisations are also becoming more actively involved in implementing VET. Since the 2016 amendments to the VET act, they can propose changes to the list of VET qualifications.

Since the introduction in 2015/16, some schools have started offering dual VET programmes. Several pilot projects supporting dual training aim at expanding the training offer in cooperation with business and public authorities from Bulgaria and abroad. Measures, including specialised forums, media campaigns and events, help attract learners and motivate employers to become involved in dual VET that is still mostly project-based.

To address quality concerns, the Ministry of Education and Science is adopting the European quality assurance reference framework (EQAVET). The 2015 quality assurance regulation mandates VET providers to organise self-assessment based on a set of indicators.

The government is strengthening initial training and continuing professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers to motivate more young people to enter the profession. The new system helps them to keep up with technological innovation and modern teaching methods, and allows for faster career advancement linked to performance.

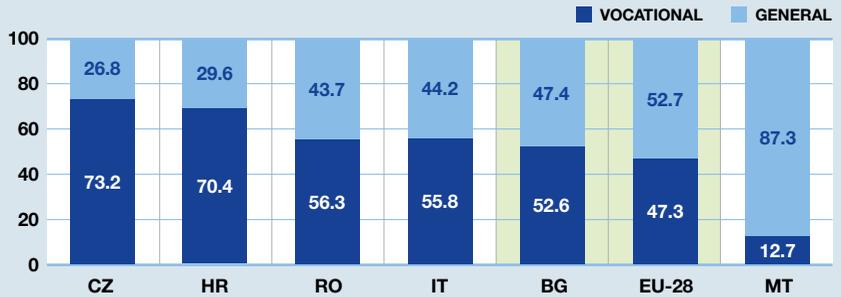
The 2015-17 VET strategy action plan proposes ways to address the challenges: modularisation, more flexible VET provision, and better and more easily accessible career guidance services. Its implementation is also likely to contribute to raising adult participation in learning, which is currently among the lowest in the EU.



## Education and training in figures

### Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes

% of all students in upper secondary education, 2015



NB: EU-28 value is based on estimated Eurostat values.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 5.10.2017.

### Lifelong learning

% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 3.10.2017.

### Early leavers from education and training

% of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks prior to the survey, 2016

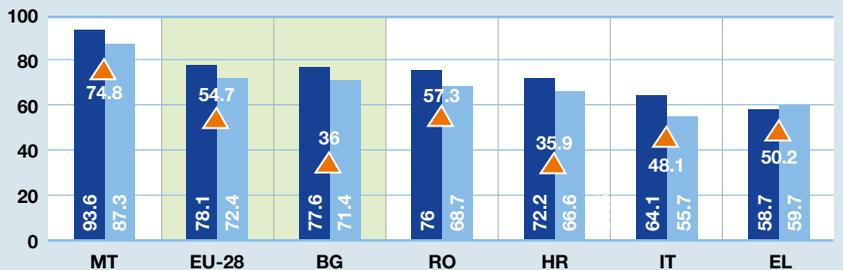


NB: Low reliability for HR 2016 value.

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 3.10.2017.

### Employment rates of young graduates

% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2016



■ Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 ■ Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 ▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 5.10.2017.

## Further information

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<a href="http://www.mlsp.government.bg">www.mlsp.government.bg</a>	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
<a href="http://www.az.government.bg">www.az.government.bg</a>	Employment Agency
<a href="http://www.nsi.bg/en">www.nsi.bg/en</a>	National Statistical Institute
<a href="http://www.vet-bg.com">www.vet-bg.com</a>	national VET portal



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)

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