Quality Assurance in VET: Bulgaria

This document provides an overview of quality assurance in VET in the respective country. It covers information on VET systems and how quality assurance takes place, which organisations are responsible for VET policy and any recent developments in VET policy.

VET system and quality assurance

Overview of the VET system and how quality assurance takes place

In Bulgaria VET allows students to acquire both a secondary education diploma and a professional qualification. It prepares citizens for participating in the labour market and other fields of public life by creating conditions for acquiring professional qualifications and for continuous improvement.

The system of vocational education and training includes:
- Career orientation.
- Vocational training and vocational education.
- Validation of professional knowledge.
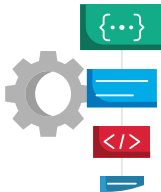- Skills and competencies.

Vocational training can be provided in the form of work-based learning (dual training system).

School VET begins when students are 13 or 14 years old, and work-based learning (dual training system) begins when students are 16 years old. Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in Bulgaria is defined as training to be delivered to people who are aged over 16 years old, who are no longer in formal education. It addresses both employed and unemployed people.

The legislative framework for VET in Bulgaria includes the Pre-school and School Education Act (2015) and the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999). The latter sets out the normative framework for the organisation of IVET and CVET with a view to guaranteeing the quality of VET in accordance with labour market needs and EU trends. The VET Act regulates conditions ensuring the functionality and development of the VET system based on cooperation among VET and government institutions, local authorities and social partners. The VET Act was amended in 2014 to include information on the obligations of VET institutions to build an internal quality assurance system.

The Pre-school and School Education Act establishes quality management processes, including VET. Quality management is a continuous process of organisational development based on its analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation cycle. Evaluation takes place via biennial self-assessment and inspection.[1]

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[1] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

	A national approach to quality assurance in VET including self-assessment was elaborated in 2012, in line with EQAVET and its indicators. It was piloted in 22 vocational secondary schools in the country, and it was validated through broad consultations with principal stakeholders. The self-assessment model based on EQAVET indicators was introduced into vocational secondary schools in the 2012/2013 school year.[2] A Framework with indicators for VET Quality Management was developed in 2019. The document is published at the website of the Ministry of Education and Science: https://www.mon.bg/bg/2135 The administration of school education in Bulgaria is organised on four levels: national, regional, municipal and school level. Decentralisation and broadening the autonomy of education establishments are major characteristics of school education nowadays.[3] More information about the VET system in Bulgaria can be found on Cedefop's VET in Europe database: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/bulgaria
System-level QA arrangements	In 2012, a national model for QA in VET was developed, which included the 10 EQAVET indicators and it required the use of the quality cycle. The indicators are used at the system-level for monitoring the quality of IVET. In some cases, new data collection processes were used to gather evidence for the indicators. In CVET providers are required to employ a quality assurance system to obtain a license to deliver CVET programmes and to apply self-assessment indicators on an annual basis. Regional management units of the Ministry of Education and Science (territorial administrative units, situated in the 28 district centres) conduct inspections of schools, exploring the planning, organisational, coordination and control functions. The inspectorates also ensure that vocational providers are undertaking self-assessment and other quality assurance activities. In 2005, the Centre of Control and Assessment of Education and Quality in Bulgaria was developed with the aim of improving internal and external evaluation, and systems for quality control in some IVET providers. The Centre has developed a range of tools to enable 'school based' evaluation.[4]

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[2] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/bulgaria-u2
[3] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/81d18411-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/81d18411-en
[4] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
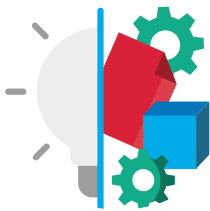
	The National Inspectorate of Education was established in 2018. It performs inspections; it does not exercise control over activities of schools' and kindergartens' directors and teachers. The inspections involve the process of preparing a comprehensive and independent assessment of the quality of the services provided by these institutions at some point of their activities, based on criteria and indicators, and grouped into fields. The inspecting bodies also monitor school compliance with legislation, school curricula and syllabuses and state education requirements in terms of performance and efficiency of the teaching methods used, and also organise examinations. They assist the teachers and evaluate their work and the quality of education delivered as well as the preliminary preparation, organisation and implementation of the annual national external tests and matriculation exams.
Provider-level QA arrangements	The school is a legal entity. Its pedagogical, organisational, methodological, administrative and managerial autonomy has been extended considerably in recent years. The school administrative bodies are the Head and the Pedagogical Council. The regional, community and school administrations ensure the necessary organisational; pedagogical; material; financial; staff and other conditions required for effective education to take place. Each school develops its curriculum in compliance with the provisions of the VET Act and the State Educational Requirements. The State Educational Requirements for the acquisition of professional qualification specify the requirements under which the curricula and syllabi for each profession shall be worked out. Headteachers of vocational training providers are required to complete self-assessments on EQAVET-based indicators. A manual for self-assessment was established in compliance with the EQAVET cycle and issued to providers. Furthermore, an online tool and templates to support self-assessment have been introduced. The tools include data collection and analysis of the results, descriptors and indicators and the proposed scores.[5] The website of National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) provides guidelines for self-assessment of the quality of the training provided by VET centres.[6]

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[5] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[6] https://www.navet.government.bg/en/

Which organisation(s) are responsible for VET policy?	The two bodies responsible for VET in Bulgaria are the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). The MES has overall responsibility for the school system, and it is the main policy making body with budgetary responsibility and control for IVET.[7] Policy responsibilities for developing CVET in Bulgaria are divided between the MES and the MLSP.
Recent policy developments (in the last 12 months)	• The Strategic Framework for Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)[8] was adopted as the key document stipulating strategic goals, and the foreseen measures, for achieving them in the current decade. • The ordinance for the conduct of state exams for graduation in VET was amended in December 2022, giving new opportunities for flexible performance-based exit from the secondary level of the VET system.

Specific projects in the country (optional)

Please provide a short description of recent projects or initiatives in the field of QA in VET that you would like to	• A prototype of indicators for monitoring and quality management of the vocational education was elaborated within the project 'EQAVET: Vision for Revision (VIREO)', implemented by The Ministry of Education and Science with the financial support of the Erasmus+ programme and it was completed in 2019. The project supported the monitoring processes and quality management in schools in the VET system, as well as in bodies formulating and implementing policies in VET, using a model of indicators calculated on the basis of available objective data from various administrative registers in the Republic of Bulgaria, and corresponding to European and national priorities for improving the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of VET. The indicator framework covers all EQAVET indicators.[9] • The EQAVET: VIREO 2 pilot project, funded under the Erasmus+ programme and completed in 2021, set the ground for a holistic VET graduate tracking system. EU principles, standards and

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[7] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[8] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/bulgaria-2021-30-strategic-framework-vet#:~:text='In%202030%2C%20all%20young%20people,their%20competences%20through%20lifelong%20learning.

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1536&langId=en

highlight for your country	methodology for VET graduates tracking were described in a prototype, endorsed by the members of the Consultative Council on VET in September 2020. The pilot analysis was structured on the base of the approved model by incorporation of methodology, indicators for monitoring of administrative data, administrative data analyses, presentation of themes and analysis of results of surveys. The model will be used by VET institutions which participate in policy formulation.[10] • A national inspectorate was established with the function to conduct a comprehensive independent expert assessment of the quality of education provided throughout the education system from kindergarten school level.
Which organisation(s) are responsible for the project / initiative	• Ministry of Education and Science. • Industry Watch Group (subcontractor). • Regional Education Authorities in pilot regions.

Use of EQAVET labels	
Do you use an EQAVET label or seal to certify VET providers in your country?	No ☒
	Yes ☐

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[10] https://web.mon.bg/bg/100768