



Vocational education and training in Bulgaria - Fact sheet

Overview

Vocational education and training, characterised by a high degree of centralisation, is still at the initial stage of reform. Severe economic constraints may impede the reform plans. The current legal framework does not take account of the conditions of a social market economy, but concentrates only on the reform of vocational schools. Main challenges include the development of a coherent legal framework and the enhancement of institutional capacities.

Responsible bodies

The **Ministry for Education and Science** has the overall responsibility for the entire school system and is the main policy-making body with budgetary responsibility and control for initial training.

The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** and the Ministry for Education and Science are both responsible for adult education.

An accreditation agency for vocational education and training is at present under discussion.

Financing of vocational training

Vocational education and training is currently financed out of the state budget (4.27% of GDP in 1995). The Ministry for Education and Science allocates the money to schools, which have little autonomy. In 1995 of all the public funds for education, 33.53% were spent on the vocational and professional education of young people. Donors finance the upgrading of the system and pilot schools through bilateral and other international agreements.

Continuing training

The division of policy responsibilities on continuing training between the Ministries of Education and Labour is unclear. A major problem for continuing training is its separation from current reforms of initial school-based vocational education and training. The main current challenge in continuing training is to address the imminent redundancies of teachers through re-training in order to avoid unemployment.

International support activities

Through bilateral and multilateral international agreements, donors make very significant contributions to the vocational education and training system. A PHARE pilot project launched in 1993 targeted post-secondary vocational education and training and reviewed and developed principles for the reform of the whole vocational education and training system (for example curriculum development for 5 occupational profiles and a review of post-secondary system). This laid the foundations for expansion into much larger PHARE programmes in 1995 and 1996 on education and training, which include the development of standards and assessment procedures, teacher training, and preparatory work for the development of the legal framework. Significant bilateral vocational education and training projects are being carried out in partnership with Germany (establishment of 3 training centres, economics training in 5 vocational schools), Austria (training firms), and Denmark (economics curricula in post secondary schools) and others are under development with amongst others France and the UK.





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National priorities

In the absence of a coherent policy document at government level, the Board of the Ministry for Education and Science has adopted the following guidelines for the development of the vocational education and training sector (Concept for the Development of Secondary Education, 1996):

- to develop a system for teacher training;
- to establish an independent agency for vocational qualifications;
- to prepare a new list of occupations in the secondary and post-secondary vocational education and training;
- to develop new curricula;

- to develop a modular approach in vocational training.

Establishment of a National Observatory

The European Training Foundation has supported the establishment of a National Observatory in Bulgaria (hosted in the PMU-Education, ul. Graf Ignatiev 15, Sofia). The National Observatory gathers and analyses information on developments of the vocational training system and the labour market. On the basis of this information the National Observatory and the Foundation periodically produce country reports on vocational training developments in Bulgaria.

