

Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria: Governance and Funding Press note

- Bulgaria should continue efforts to strengthen its VET system by ensuring that provision is better aligned with labour market needs, argues a new OECD report released today.

Bulgaria has undertaken significant reforms to strengthen its vocational education and training system in recent years, but challenges remain in ensuring that provision is equitably available and that it is closely aligned with labour market needs. The OECD releases a report today on the governance and funding of VET in Bulgaria, exploring how new policy approaches can address weaknesses in the system.

While continued efforts on reform are important, the report argues for placing greater emphasis on building up capacity across the whole VET system to enable better policy implementation. From the perspective of comparable countries, VET provision is relatively centralised in Bulgaria and potential exists to improve engagement at local levels and to strengthen the involvement of employers. By doing so, VET providers can engage more closely with local recruiters, provision can better reflect local needs and capacity can be released at a national level to oversee the overall development of the VET system. In order to address the varying demand for skills by economic sector and geographical areas, both sectoral and subnational cooperation between social partners and authorities should be strengthened. The report further argues for addressing weaknesses in the collection and processing of data on student outcomes (completion rates, rate of employment, transition to tertiary education) and to better evaluate the impact of the policies that are implemented.

Work-based learning in companies has many advantages, including the acquisition of relevant skills and the sharing of costs with employers. As the funding of VET in Bulgaria is relatively low by international comparison, the report argues for strengthening work-based learning for students. Bulgaria also faces substantial challenges in ensuring equity across the education system. The report argues that more can be done to overcome this challenge, for instance by revising the funding formula to address equity concerns, improve the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and ensure that all students enjoy good outcomes and that VET ensures a smooth transition to the labour market or to higher levels of educational attainment.

“VET in Bulgaria has many strengths to draw upon with many students choosing VET and a relatively low rate of early leaving. To be fully effective, however, there is a pressing need to engage employers more closely in all levels of provision. Closer collaboration will make VET programmes more relevant, and attractive, to both learners and employers, and will ensure good outcomes to all students”, says Montserrat Gomendio, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills.

The OECD has reviewed national systems of vocational education and training around the world since 2008, published more than 40 reports in this topic. It has published three synthesis reports with its key findings - the latest one on how to develop and improve apprenticeships [here](#) and more detail about VET at the OECD [here](#).