

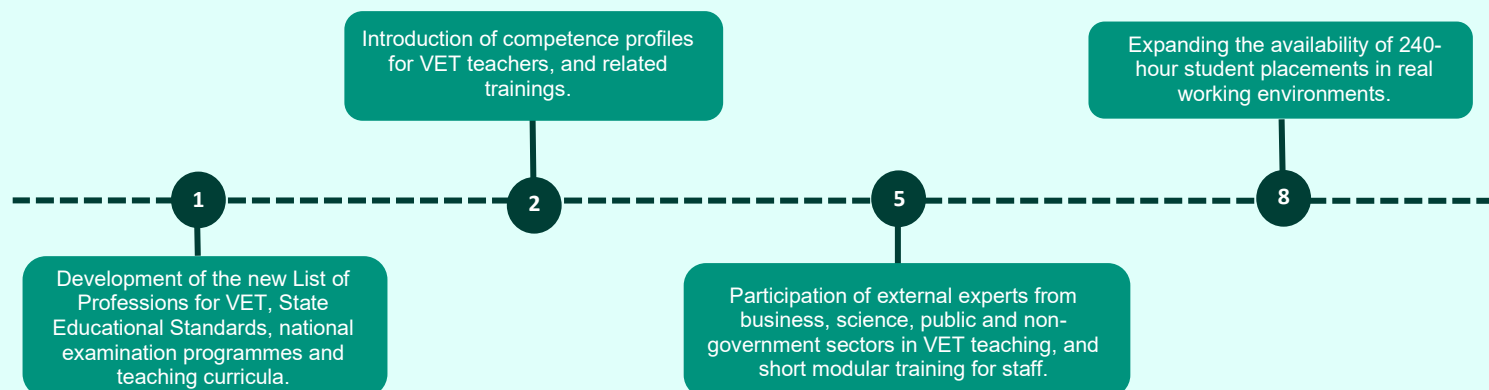
The *Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training* project in Bulgaria: Lessons from early implementation

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) (BG05SFPR001-3.001) aims to enhance the responsiveness of vocational pathways to evolving labour market needs through adapting VET to labour market dynamics, and equipping learners with skills for current and emerging professions.

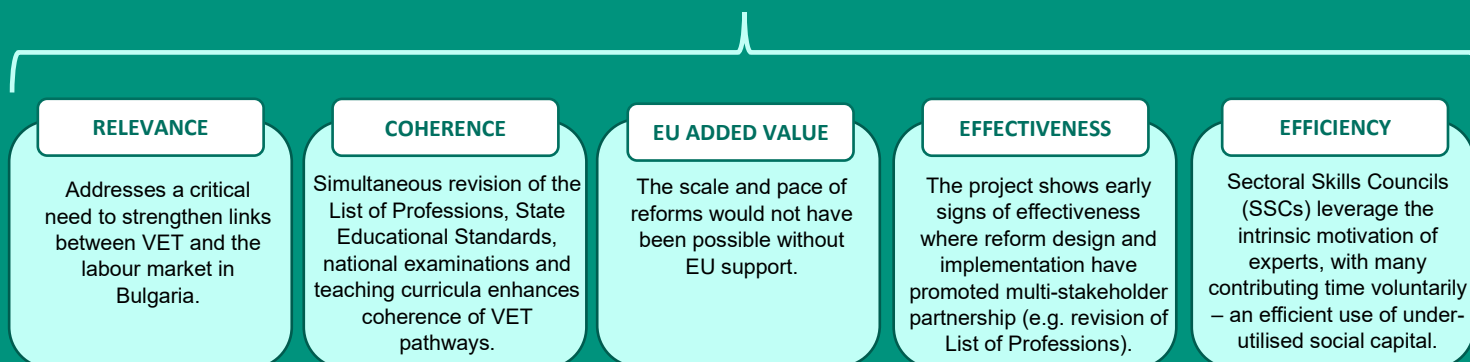
KEY PROJECT ACTIVITIES COVERED BY THE INTERIM EVALUATION

Structured forms of collaboration between VET and the labour market at system and school level

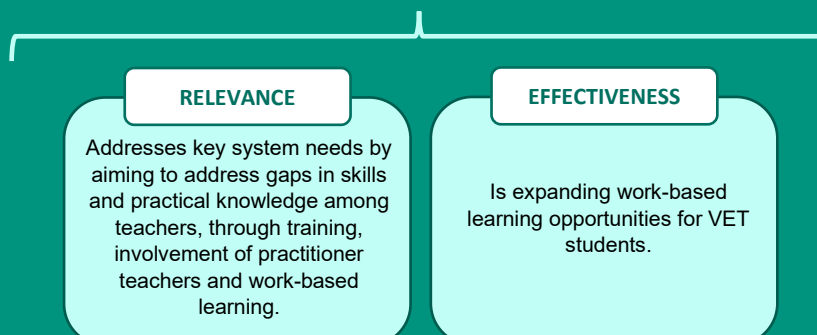


STRENGTHS OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

SYSTEM-LEVEL



SCHOOL-LEVEL



KEY CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

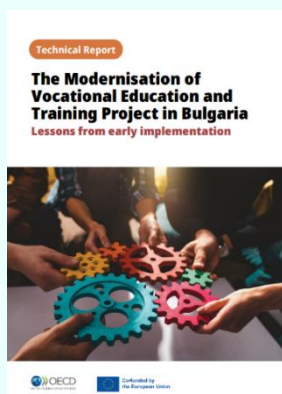
The effectiveness and sustainability of key activities can be further strengthened

- SSCs, expert and school drafting teams struggled to attract industry practitioners, leading to overrepresentation of academics.
- Tight timelines appear to have constrained quality in the drafting of the State Educational Standards.
- The process of developing teacher profiles lacks structured review and clear implementation plans.
- Lack of clear operational guidance to schools for Activity 5, as well as of incentives and recognition, may inhibit outcomes
- Across drafting processes, there was a reliance on individual expert judgement with uneven use of labour-market evidence and a lack of shared content standards for quality.
- Project monitoring is largely focused on activity tracking as opposed to project outcomes, limiting opportunities to learn from implementation and adapt.
- SSCs have strong support, but long-term viability depends on future contracting models that ensure independence and predictable engagement.
- The 240-hour student placements are valued by schools and students, but the provision of financial incentives for students is reliant on EU funding and therefore is currently time-limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Institutionalise the SSCs** to continue strengthening VET's responsiveness to labour market needs over time by establishing a clear legal framework, flexible contracting options and simplified recruitment processes.
- 2 Review the design of future revisions of the State Educational Standards.** This may include making facilitating the recruitment of industry practitioners, extending drafting timelines, and involving SSCs earlier.
- 3 Strengthen quality assurance in the development of VET programmes and qualifications** by establishing common content standards and minimum expectations for the use of labour-market data.
- 4 Establish a clear, staged review of teacher competence profiles,** integrating feedback from education and industry. Develop a comprehensive implementation plan covering initial and continuous teacher development.
- 5 For the development of teaching curricula, clarify the composition of drafting teams and strengthen the support they receive,** including establishing a multi-staged review process.
- 6 Provide further guidance to schools on good practice for collaborating with external practitioners** from business and non-governmental organisations, covering scheduling, delivery formats and expected outcomes.
- 7 Explore sustainable options for supporting student placements in the long term,** including new approaches to financing, timing and recruiting host organisations.
- 8 Strengthen project monitoring tools to drive learning and effectiveness** by expanding the questionnaires to capture outcome-oriented data and improving indicator design for greater comparability.

Information about the evaluation



This summary is based on findings published in OECD (2026), *The Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training project in Bulgaria: Lessons from early implementation*. The full report is available via the QR code below and at <https://doi.org/10.1787/ad5ceddc-en>.

The report is an output of the OECD's evaluation support under the Agreement on multi-year support for the implementation of the Evaluation Plan of Programme "Education" 2021-2027 with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Executive Agency "Programme Education" and the OECD. Under this agreement, the OECD will conduct a series of interim and final evaluations of initiatives in five key thematic areas: 1) inclusive education, 2) integration of marginalised communities, 3) digitalisation and competency-based education, 4) vocational education and training, and 5) higher education.

For more information about either the report or the OECD's support to Bulgaria, please contact christa.rawkins@oecd.org or zhasmin.avetisyan@oecd.org.

