



## REFORM OF BULGARIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM BETTER CAREER PROSPECTS FOR BULGARIAN YOUTH THANKS TO DUAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING



As part of the project, young people in Bulgaria are being trained as dairy technologists in the My Day Bulgaria dairy factory.

Practical and labour-market oriented vocational education is the core of the reform of the Bulgarian vocational education system and the goal of this project. As part of its enlargement contribution, Switzerland is supporting Bulgaria in establishing a dual vocational education and training system that builds on the Swiss model and Swiss expertise. Vocational training will be coupled with in-company training and have a greater focus on practical job skills. As a result, the workforce will be better qualified and able to meet market demands, which will contribute to the reduction of youth unemployment in Bulgaria.

Vocational schools in Bulgaria offer their students theoretical and practical training without knowing what exactly Bulgarian businesses expect from their graduates or how the labour market is evolving. This can lead to a gap between the skills taught in vocational education and training programmes and what businesses expect from graduates, and consequently also to a high unemployment rate, particularly among young people who have not yet entered the job market.

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### DRAWING ON THE SWISS MODEL TO REFORM THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The most popular type of vocational education and training in Switzerland combines education and training in a vocational school with in-company training. This dual education and training system is widely recognised as a key asset of the Swiss education system. The system takes account of the vocational qualifications that are actually needed in the labour market and of the jobs that are available. Thanks to this close link between theory and practice, Switzerland has a high percentage of skilled people compared with other European countries.

The Bulgarian government is highly interested in drawing on Swiss expertise and experience to reform its vocational education and training system through a more effective combination of theoretical training in vocational schools with practical work experience. The business community supports this reform, as it meets its need for better qualified personnel who have undergone training aligned to trends in the market place.

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### DEVELOPING AND TESTING THE MODELS

The project contributes to the reform of the Bulgarian vocational education and training system by introducing principles from Switzerland's dual system adapted to the local context. Swiss experts assist Bulgarian experts in developing new vocational education and training programmes. This is done in close collaboration with vocational schools and with businesses operating in specific sectors.

Teachers and instructors in the businesses concerned then undergo advanced training courses to enable them to teach according to the new curricula. A key aspect is to apply in the workplace what students learn in school. The new programme is then implemented at every stage of vocational education and training. At the beginning of the 2015 school year, two vocational schools, working in partnership with about 10 companies, began training apprentice mechanics and technicians in the manufacture of dairy products.

Education experts and representatives of Bulgarian vocational schools and businesses are designing vocational training programmes modelled on the Swiss system.



## STANDARDISING APPRENTICESHIPS

Reforming the education system into an apprenticeship-based system is a challenge in some respects because it involves numerous stakeholders, including several ministries and partners in the education and private sectors. In Bulgaria, where a university education is considered to be the only path to professional success, it is also necessary to show the benefits of this new system and to change perceptions. Therefore, promoting the dual vocational education and training system among decision-makers, the private sector, schools, parents and pupils is a key priority of the project.

By 2019 curricula for at least 10 trades, which will benefit 1,200 apprentices, will be developed as part of the project. Swiss experts will transfer their skills and expertise to Bulgarian experts to enable them to develop new vocational education and training programmes independently.

These initial experiences must be accompanied by legislative changes to facilitate the introduction of the dual vocational education and training system into the Bulgarian vocational education system. Thus, the experience gained throughout the project will help implement the national strategy the government adopted in 2014 and encourage the replication on a much wider scale of the dual vocational education and training model developed with Switzerland's support.

## THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

### OBJECTIVE

Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

### THEME

Vocational education and training

### LAND

Bulgaria

### PARTNER

Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science  
Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)  
Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce

### CONTEXT

Bulgaria's average national youth unemployment rate is almost 12%, but in some regions it is as much as 25%. Employers in many sectors of the economy lament the fact that the vocational education system largely fails to teach practical job skills, making it difficult for them to find qualified personnel.

### OBJECTIVE

The project aims to put in place a dual vocational education and training system in Bulgaria drawing on Swiss expertise. The objective is to achieve a better match between vocational education and the needs of the labour market to make young people more employable.

### ACTIVITIES

- Developing and introducing in schools and businesses curricula based on the dual vocational education and training system
- Training experts, vocational school teachers and in-company instructors
- Promoting dual vocational education and training at the national level and replicating pilot projects in other regions

### TARGET GROUPS

At least 10 vocational schools and associated business sectors, young apprentices and Bulgarian education experts.

### COSTS

Total project costs:  
CHF 3.53 million  
Swiss contribution:  
CHF 3 million

### IMPLEMENTATION

Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science

### DURATION

2014 - 2019



**«It is exciting to put theory into practice. The Dual Education Project gives me the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge and opens doors for my professional future.»**

Milena Tchilingirova, Student at the Vocational School for Food Processing Technologies, Sofia