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Using appraisal to motivate and support the professional growth of teachers

Bulgaria has introduced several reforms that aim to enhance the teaching profession. For example, Bulgaria introduced a differentiated career structure for teachers, increased salaries and made continuous professional learning a mandatory requirement. Bulgaria has also updated the core content for initial teacher education, eliminated tuition fees for many initial teacher education programmes and updated the country's teacher standards. Despite this progress, there is a growing need for greater coherence across initiatives, especially as these reforms have important financial implications for the government. This chapter looks at how Bulgaria could link changes to structural teacher policies in order to help recruit the best and most motivated teacher candidates, as well as encourage practising teachers to develop their competencies.

Introduction

Research suggests that what teachers know and do is the strongest direct school-based influence on student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000^[1]; OECD, 2005^[2]). At present, Bulgaria is facing two main challenges related to the teaching profession: the need to update teachers' competencies to improve student learning within the context of a new school curriculum and the need to expand the number of new entrants to the profession to replace an ageing cohort of teachers. This chapter looks at how Bulgaria could strengthen both summative and formative teacher appraisal processes at different points in a teacher's career to help address these issues. Specifically, Bulgaria should introduce a formative, school-based appraisal process to provide regular feedback to teachers on their strengths, weaknesses and professional development needs. Such feedback will be essential to modernise and improve teaching practices. Bulgaria should also reform career progression procedures to better encourage teachers' development of relevant knowledge and skills. This will involve revising Bulgaria's teacher standards (the professional profile for teachers) to identify the competencies teachers need for different career levels and using them as the criteria for a more consistent and objective attestation appraisal for promotion. Bulgaria should also require new teachers to undergo a summative appraisal to establish a baseline that all newly certified teachers must meet. Furthermore, Bulgaria should improve initial teacher education and professional development programmes, and focus them more centrally on developing the student-centred approaches teachers need to deliver the country's new competency-based school curriculum.

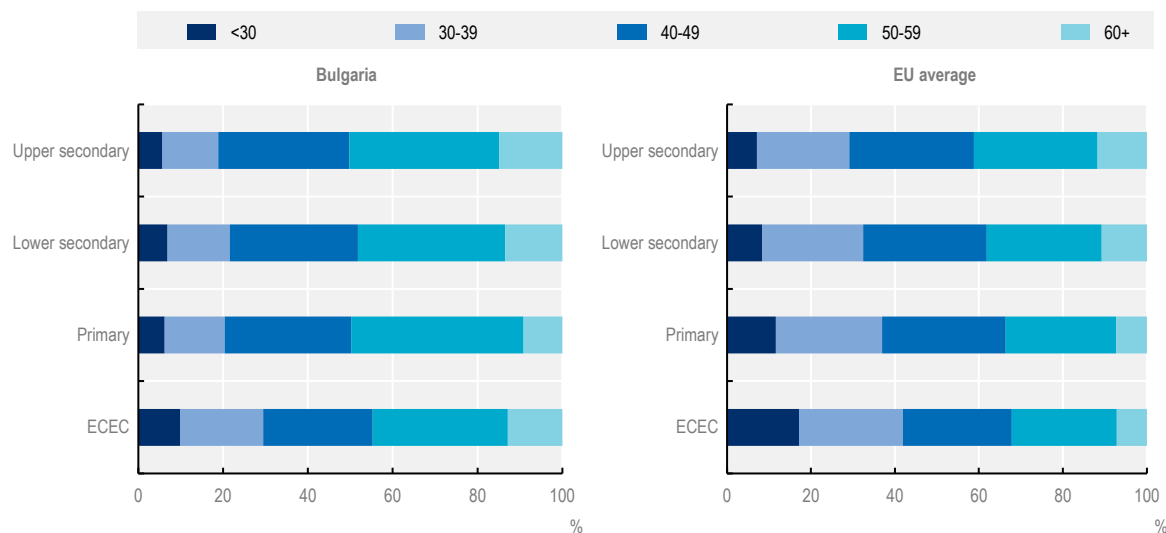
The teaching profession in Bulgaria

In recent years, Bulgaria has introduced a range of policies to develop the teaching profession and attract new teachers. Most of these reforms were initially proposed in Bulgaria's National Strategy for the Development of Pedagogical Staff 2014-2020, the Pre-school and School Education Act 2016 and a series of related ordinances. Specifically, the reforms include new teacher standards, a teacher career structure that requires an accumulation of continuous professional development credits and degrees, and an established set of core content for initial teacher education programmes. With the introduction of these reforms, Bulgaria has established structures and frameworks to strengthen the teaching profession in ways similar to other European countries. However, a number of these reforms related to the teaching profession have only been partially implemented or have not yet had the desired impact.

The teaching workforce in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is making efforts to replace retiring teachers with new entrants to the profession

As in most European Union (EU) and OECD member countries, the teacher workforce in Bulgaria is mainly female and works primarily in municipal or state-owned schools, meaning they are public sector employees. The country has a declining school-age population, largely caused by a reduction in the number of births and migration flows (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014^[3]), which would normally decrease the overall demand for teachers. However, the teaching population in Bulgaria is older (Figure 3.1), which has created pressure to replace retiring teachers. For example, 48% of lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria are age 50 or above, compared to an EU average of 38% (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). Bulgaria has already introduced several policy measures to attract new entrants to the profession, including significantly increasing teachers' salaries and covering the cost of tuition fees for initial teacher education programmes. These actions have contributed to a growing number of new teachers in recent years. For example, in 2020, almost 1 000 more new teachers began working in schools compared to 2016 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[5]).

Figure 3.1. Teachers' age by the level of education they teach, 2019

Note: ECEC – Early childhood education and care.

Source: Eurostat (2021^[6]), *Classroom Teachers and Academic Staff by Education Level, Programme Orientation, Sex and Age Groups* [educ_uoe_perp01], <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (accessed on 20 July 2021).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/tnahc8>

There are acute teacher shortages in parts of the country and for certain subject areas

Bulgaria is facing teacher shortages in particular curriculum subject areas, including mathematics, physics, astronomy, computer science and information technology (IT). These shortages are especially acute in socio-economically disadvantaged parts of the country. To help address this issue, the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter the Ministry) introduced Motivated Teachers in 2020, a national programme designed to recruit subject specialists with diverse backgrounds into the teaching profession (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). Bulgaria is also experiencing a shortage of primary school teachers, teachers of foreign languages and some vocational education and training (VET) subjects (EC, 2019^[7]). In addition to working with professional and non-profit associations to recruit and prepare new teachers, the government is currently working with the World Bank to develop a new teacher forecasting model that will help Bulgaria to better identify specific shortage areas and manage the teaching workforce. Within this context, there may be scope to introduce additional measures to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff areas and subjects.

Teacher career structure and salary progression

Bulgaria has introduced a new teacher career structure that places significant emphasis on the completion of professional development activities

Bulgaria's teacher career structure consists of three levels: teacher, senior teacher and chief teacher. Promotion to higher levels is based on pre-requisites such as a teacher's years of experience and completion of professional development but, from the school year 2021/22, will also consider appraisals of a teacher's performance (Table 3.1). Adding a performance appraisal to the teacher promotion process will ensure that career progression is based on evidence of teachers' effectiveness and not just their participation in learning activities. Similar to differentiated career structures found in a growing number of OECD countries, higher career levels in Bulgaria are associated with salary increases and additional responsibilities (Schleicher, 2012^[8]). This structure helps reward teachers for developing their knowledge

and skills and taking on new tasks. It can also benefit the school, especially if a teacher's new tasks focus on improving teaching and learning, as they do in Bulgaria. For example, the functions of senior and chief teachers in Bulgaria include serving as mentors to new teachers, as well as analysing student assessment and examination results in the school (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]). However, Bulgaria may not be leveraging the competencies of more experienced teachers as there is not much distinction between the responsibilities of senior and chief teachers.

Table 3.1. The teacher career structure in Bulgaria

	Teacher	Senior teacher*	Chief teacher
Pre-requisites	Completing an accredited initial teacher education programme resulting in a degree or professional qualification, including passing a practical examination	At least 10 years of work experience as a qualified teacher	Holds the position of senior teacher
		The required professional development qualification credits (i.e. 48 hours or 3 credits in 4 years)	The required professional development qualification credits (i.e. 48 hours or 3 credits in 4 years)
		At least a 4 th or 5 th professional qualification degree (i.e. 16 hours of training each) from a higher education institution, including an oral or written examination	At least a third professional qualification degree (i.e. a one-year professional-pedagogical programme) or higher from a higher education institution
		As of 2021/22, attestation appraisal results of at least "meets requirements"	As of 2021/22, attestation appraisal results of "exceptional performance"
Number of teachers (2020/21)	32 898	43 977	1 852

Note: * Fast track to the senior teacher level: obtaining a larger number of professional development qualification credits, a third, second or first professional qualification degree and "exceeds requirements" or higher on the attestation appraisal.

Sources: Ministry of Education and Science (2020^[10]), *Country Background Report for Bulgaria*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia; Ministry of Education and Science (2021^[11]), "Additional detailed information for the preparation of the OECD Report on Bulgaria", Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

Bulgaria has increased teachers' salaries to boost the attractiveness of the profession

In recent years, Bulgaria has implemented one of the highest increases in annual teacher salaries in Europe (EC, 2019^[7]). While remuneration remains among the lowest in the EU, the average salary of pre-school and school teachers in Bulgaria increased by almost 79% between 2016 and 2020 (EC, 2020^[12]). The Bulgarian Union of Teachers welcomed this as a measure that would boost the status of the teaching profession and increase the number of teachers (ETUC, n.d.^[13]). The average salary was estimated to be 15% higher than the average salary in the country in 2021 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[5]). This change has already started making the profession more competitive. For example, regional departments of education (REDs) reported to the OECD review team that they face increased difficulty in hiring methodological experts who could earn more by working as teachers.

Bulgaria is among the countries in Europe in which salary progression is swift and significant in a teacher's initial 15 years of employment. For example, it typically takes lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria 15 years or fewer to reach the minimum salary of a chief teacher, which was 37% more than that of teachers at the beginning of their careers in the school year of 2018/19 (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[14]). This salary increase was significantly higher than the salary progression in most of Bulgaria's Balkan neighbours, although lower than in many other European countries, like Slovenia (50.8%) and Hungary (45%) (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[14]). It is difficult to compare Bulgaria to other European countries with respect to teachers' salary progression over the entirety of their careers because Bulgaria does not statutorily define salary ranges for teachers. Instead, an annual ordinance sets the minimum starting salary

for each of the three levels of the teaching career based on priorities in the annual state budget, while a collective labour agreement sets out conditions like yearly increases for years of service. However, it is clear that teachers in Bulgaria can obtain their most substantial pay rises within a relatively short period of time. In contrast, significant pay increases over the length of a teacher's career may have a positive impact on teacher retention (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[14]).

As well as salary increases linked with career progression, teachers in Bulgaria can receive “additional labour remuneration”, based on an annual analysis of their work. Per school, this remuneration totals up to 5% of the annual amount of funds for salaries (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[5]). The different types of additional remuneration are established by law with their corresponding minimum pay levels decided through collective bargaining processes. Schools also have considerable autonomy to set additional criteria for these bonuses within their internal rules, making it somewhat difficult to implement additional remuneration policies fairly and equitably across schools. Teachers in Bulgaria also receive allowances for taking on additional responsibilities, completing continuous professional development that leads to professional qualification degrees (see below) and having further formal qualifications (e.g. in a foreign language, a doctorate) (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[14]).

Bulgaria has revised requirements for initial teacher education and continuous professional development

Requirements for entry to initial teacher education programmes vary and tuition was recently eliminated

Like many other European countries, Bulgaria has both concurrent and consecutive models of initial teacher preparation that lead to either a bachelor's or master's degree (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). These programmes generally last three or four years (concurrent) or one year (consecutive). Bulgaria has over 40 faculties, colleges and higher education departments, which offer initial teacher education (as of 2014) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014^[3]). Entry requirements vary by institution but typically consider grades from the State Matriculation examination at the end of upper secondary education or performance on an entry examination (EC, 2018^[15]). OECD countries commonly use a combination of these methods, along with interviews, to select candidates for initial teacher education (OECD, 2014^[16]).

There are indications that the quality of applicants to Bulgaria's initial teacher education programmes has not been high. According to the National Strategy for the Development of Pedagogical Staff 2014-2020, high school graduates who chose higher education programmes related to the pedagogical profession tended to have a relatively low level of readiness (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014^[3]). Moreover, initial teacher education graduates enter the profession at low rates in recent years (i.e. only 60%, according to Bulgaria University Rating) (EC, 2019^[7]). The low transition rate between initial teacher education and work represents potentially significant resource inefficiencies, especially considering that Bulgaria eliminated tuition at public higher education institutions in 2020 for students studying pedagogy and other areas with expected labour shortages (EC, 2019^[7]).

There is a core content framework for initial teacher education programmes but it has not yet had a significant impact on the curriculum

Like the majority of OECD countries, Bulgaria has established a core content framework for initial teacher education programmes, including minimum hours of study in compulsory academic disciplines (e.g. pedagogy, information and communication technology [ICT]), electives and the practicum (OECD, 2014^[16]). In 2021, the core content framework was updated to increase the amount of study time in important areas like pedagogy, competency-based teaching approaches and inclusive education. However, the length of the practicum (e.g. 10 European Credits Transfer System [ECTS] credits for lower secondary concurrent programmes) remains short by European standards (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]).

Core content frameworks can help to ensure that programmes cover essential topics and reduce variability in initial teacher preparation. However, as reported to the OECD review team, Bulgaria’s framework has had a minimal impact on the content of programmes, which remain teacher-centred and focused on theory over practice. To address this, the Ministry established the Increasing the Competencies of Teachers Who Prepare Future Teachers programme in January 2021 to train faculty members in competency-based approaches and to help ensure that these approaches are covered in initial teacher education programme curricula. Accreditation is another measure OECD countries use to ensure that programmes are successfully preparing teacher candidates in core content areas. However, Bulgaria’s accreditation process does not do this and is general to all higher education programmes in professional fields. As a result, accreditation criteria are not specific to initial teacher education or based on teacher standards, which is the case in an increasing number of OECD countries (OECD, 2020^[17]).

Bulgaria has introduced mandatory training requirements for teachers but there are issues with quality and relevance

Bulgaria has made teachers’ continuous professional learning mandatory, similar to most European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018^[18]). As of 2016, there is an expectation that teachers take two types of continuous professional development: compulsory training for continuing qualification credits and longer programmes that lead to one of five successive qualification degrees for career progression (Table 3.2). Positively, the government provides earmarked funding to schools to cover some staff development costs, which can help remove some barriers to participation. Data from TALIS 2018 revealed that almost 60% of lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria reported that high costs prohibited their participation in training, although it was unclear whether this referenced mandatory professional development, for which schools bear the cost, or professional development for career progression (OECD, 2019^[19]). There is also encouraging preliminary evidence that Bulgaria’s mandatory requirements have increased participation rates in continuous professional development. TALIS 2018 found that 96% of lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria attended at least 1 professional development activity in the year prior to the survey, compared to around 85% in the 2013 cycle of TALIS (OECD, 2019^[20]).

Table 3.2. Continuous professional development that is mandatory or required for career progression in Bulgaria

Type	Providers	Contents	Format	Required amount	Quality assurance	Cost
Professional development leading to qualification credits	Many, including specialised service units (i.e. state-owned bodies), universities, scientific organisations and Ministry-approved training organisations	Ministry determines topics and identifies them annually in a National Programme for Qualifications	Varies, may include courses, webinars or workshops, lengthier training at universities, presentations in master classes or fora	48 hours every attestation period of 4 years (1 credit per 16 hours of training)	Accredited and monitored by the Ministry	Generally covered by the school
Professional development leading to qualification degrees	Only higher education institutions (five as of the school year 2020/21)	Higher education institutions determine topics	A combination of in-person (or online) and independent study, followed by an examination or written work	Varies from a minimum of 16 hours for 5 th and 4 th degrees to a maximum of 200 hours for a 3 rd degree	Not accredited or monitored	Covered by the teacher

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2019^[9]), *Ordinance No 15 of 22.07.2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

Still, lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria reported a particularly high need for training in their subject area, the curriculum, pedagogy, ICT and student behaviour, compared to the average across European countries that participated in TALIS 2018 (OECD, 2019^[19]; EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019^[21]). The Ministry's 2020-21 National Programme for Qualifications, which identified priority topics for continuing qualification credits, deliberately targeted these needs. However, issues with the relevance and quality of training could limit its impact on teaching practices. For example, the Ministry has approved a large number of training providers but stakeholders reported that accreditation procedures consist of vetting paperwork rather than quality. In addition, the Ministry does not play any role in ensuring that qualification degree programmes develop teachers' competencies in ways that are relevant to their effectiveness and career progression. Instead, providers have total discretion in determining what topics these programmes cover.

Teachers are also required to participate in school-based professional learning

Teachers in Bulgaria also participate in job-embedded team learning in the form of 16 academic hours of mandatory "internal institutional qualification" every year. Research demonstrates that this type of professional learning can lead to sustained improvements to teachers' competency (Schleicher, 2011^[22]). School-based training in Bulgaria can take the form of discussions, methodological support, research, sharing of innovative practices and mentorship (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]). Teachers commonly work and learn together in subject- or level-based methodological groups. In a positive step, Bulgaria now requires schools to assign new teachers a mentor within two months of their hiring but this does not always happen in practice. While these types of school-based activities are positive features of Bulgaria's professional learning system, their potential to strengthen teaching quality will largely depend on the extent to which teachers have the time and support to meaningfully engage.

Teacher appraisal in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has several distinct appraisal processes (Table 3.3). These serve a variety of purposes, such as certifying new teachers, rewarding them with financial bonuses and informing career progression. The latter process, a new attestation appraisal, will inform promotion decisions starting in the school year of 2021/22. The attestation appraisal has some features commonly found in OECD countries, such as a review of a teacher's professional portfolio. However, overall, the different appraisal processes remain largely disjointed. For example, they do not assess a teacher's performance against a set of clear reference standards for quality teaching to consistently encourage teachers to develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills in important areas.

Table 3.3. Types of teacher appraisal in Bulgaria

Types of appraisal	Reference standards	Body responsible	Guideline document	Process	Frequency	Use
Initial certification	Acquired competencies necessary to exercise the profession	Higher education institutions with accredited programmes	Ordinance on the State Requirements for the Acquisition of the Professional Qualification of "Teacher" (07.11.2016)	Completion of an accredited initial teacher education programme	Once	For the professional qualification of "teacher" certified by either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a diploma for an educational qualification degree 2. a certificate of professional qualification (for students with a degree in another field)

Types of appraisal	Reference standards	Body responsible	Guideline document	Process	Frequency	Use
	Practical examination					
	None	Examination commission of the higher education institution	Ordinance on the State Requirements for the Acquisition of the Professional Qualification of “Teacher” (07.11.2016)	Conducting and defending a pedagogical situation or lesson	Once, at the end of the practicum internship that concludes initial teacher education	
Probation appraisal	None	Principal	Labour Code	At the discretion of the principal	Once, if the principal requires a probation period	For employment status (permanent contract or termination of contract)
Attestation appraisal	Criteria based on the professional profile, school type and school development strategy	Attestation commission	Ordinance No. 15 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists (22.07.2019)	Teacher self-evaluation, review of professional portfolio, possible consideration of other evidence (e.g. from control activities)	Once every four years	For promotion, guidance for raising qualifications and professional development support
Appraisal for promotion to chief teacher (when necessary)	Criteria developed by a school commission and approved by the Pedagogical Council	Principal, with input from the Pedagogical Council	Ordinance No. 15 (22.07.2019)	Principal conducts a selection process based on the criteria	Voluntary if more teachers meet requirements than available positions	For promotion to chief teacher
Annual appraisal of achieved results of work for additional labour remuneration	Indicators for evaluating the results of the work of pedagogical specialists	A commission determined by the Pedagogical Council Principal (in small schools)	Ordinance No. 4 on Regulation and Payment of Labour (20.04.2017)	Awarding points for each indicator on an assessment card	Annually, after the end of the school year (no later than 1 st October)	For additional remuneration

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2020^[10]), *Country Background Report for Bulgaria*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

Bulgaria has introduced teacher standards

In 2015, Bulgaria introduced professional profiles for 12 different types of “pedagogical specialists”, including teachers and principals (see Chapter 4). This established clear expectations for the role of teachers within the context of Bulgaria’s national education goals (e.g. in reducing student dropout and raising student achievement) as well as the new competency-based curriculum framework. The profile covers important domains of teaching (Table 3.4), and is intended to be used for self-evaluation, appraisal and to determine training priorities (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]). However, Bulgaria could make greater use of the profile as a lever for teacher development. For example, the profile does not differentiate expectations according to levels of the teacher career structure so that teachers who demonstrate increased mastery of competencies in the profile can progress and receive a promotion. Furthermore, competencies for trainee teachers, which Bulgaria introduced in 2021, do not align with the profile. This disconnects teachers’ initial training from their ongoing development, whereas research

recommends that countries improve teaching quality by establishing a continuum of learning throughout a teacher's career (OECD, 2005^[21]).

Table 3.4. Bulgaria's professional profile for teachers: Standards and examples of sub-standards

Competencies	Knowledge, skills and attitudes	Examples of sub-standards
Pedagogical	Initial professional training (pedagogical, psychological, methodological, special subject preparation)	10 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows techniques and ways to develop communication skills, critical and constructive thinking in children and students, to effectively search, extract, select and assess the usefulness of information from various sources.
	Planning lessons or pedagogical situations	5 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines clear educational goals, plans techniques for learning and motivating children/students, for the realisation of intra-subject and inter-subject connections, and predicts the expected results.
	Organising and managing the educational process	11 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the acquisition of key competencies.
	Assessing the progress of students	4 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has skills and provides the lens and timely information about the individual development and the achieved results of the child/student, informs the parents about them and determines measures for additional support, counselling and correction, using constructive feedback to improve their teaching work. • Builds skills in children/students for self-esteem, self-criticism and self-improvement.
	Management in separate groups or classes	9 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows and applies constructive approaches to collaboration, to direct students to learning autonomy through the acquisition of key skills rather than mechanical memorisation.
Social and civil	Teamwork	4 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates and maintains constructive professional relationships.
	Work with parents and other stakeholders	4 sub-indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and encourages the efforts of parents of children/students with special educational needs, learning difficulties or disadvantages to deal with various social problems.
	Identifying own needs for continuing qualification, defining and achieving goals oriented towards continuous professional development	

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2019^[9]), *Ordinance No 15 of 22.07.2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

The main requirement to become a teacher in Bulgaria is the completion of an accredited initial teacher education programme

To obtain professional qualifications, teachers in Bulgaria must complete a three- or four-year bachelor's degree programme in education or a bachelor's degree in a specific field followed by a year of teacher education. These academic requirements are similar to those found in other European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[14]). Initial teacher education in Bulgaria concludes with a practical-applied state examination consisting of the trainee teacher's delivery and defence of a pedagogical situation or lesson for an examination commission composed of lecturers at the higher education institution and the trainee's practicum mentor. While it is positive that the examination is rooted in candidates' real teaching practice, it lacks consistency. Each higher education institution conducts its own examination and they

have thus far not assessed candidates against consistent standards to ensure that they have acquired a baseline of knowledge and practices.

Bulgaria does not have a consistent appraisal for the probation process

Bulgaria lacks a consistent probation appraisal process for new teachers, which is a common measure to confirm teaching competency in other European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). In Bulgaria, probation appraisals are not required but when they are conducted, they vary by school. The school principal can base the appraisal on any evidence they deem appropriate, such as classroom observations, the teacher's professional portfolio, student achievement or the opinion of parents, other teachers and experts from the RED (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[10]). Appraisal results are used to grant a permanent contract or, if negative, terminate a fixed-term contract.

A new attestation appraisal process aims to inform career progression decisions

Bulgaria will start implementing its new attestation appraisal of teachers in the school year of 2021/22. This process requires teachers to undergo an attestation appraisal every four years, although there is a fast track under certain circumstances (Table 3.3). The appraisal intends to inform decisions about career progression, as well as provide encouragement and guidance for improving teachers' competencies. A strength of the attestation appraisal is that it intentionally addresses underperformance. Poor results trigger a systematic remedial response that includes a support plan, mentorship and re-appraisal. Multiple low ratings may lead to the cancellation of a teacher's contract. However, there is scope to revise the design of this process to further support teachers' development. For example, each school's pedagogical council has full autonomy to define five criteria for the appraisal process and establish a scale for determining levels of achievement. This means that appraisal criteria vary, which does not support consistent judgements of performance or encourage teachers to develop competencies in the professional profile.

The current process also raises concerns about the integrity of appraisers' judgements. Members of the appraisal commission such as the teacher's employer (e.g. school principal), a RED advisor and representatives of the pedagogical council are all likely to have working relationships with the teacher, which makes it difficult to ensure their impartiality. The additional step required to become a chief teacher also raises concerns since a school commission proposes both the selection criteria and the number of chief teacher positions available within the school. If there are more qualified teachers than available positions, the principal organises a selection process. While having a formal process to select chief teachers is positive, without careful management, the involvement of teachers' peers could undermine trust in the promotion.

Finally, the attestation appraisal currently lacks direct evidence of teaching practice to inform judgements and feedback. While the appraisal is based on a teacher's self-evaluation and professional portfolio, classroom observations, which are essential for measuring teacher competency authentically, are not mandatory (OECD, 2013^[23]). Moreover, teachers receive their appraisal results in the form of one of five ratings on an attestation card (i.e. meets minimum requirements; partially meets requirements; meets requirements; exceeds requirements; or exceptional performance). The card does not provide room for descriptive feedback, which will make it difficult for teachers to understand what specifically they can do to develop their practices.

No appraisal process focuses primarily on teachers' development but school principals regularly conduct classroom observations

Bulgaria's new attestation appraisal process does not provide opportunities for regular dialogue and feedback with teachers on their strengths, weaknesses and professional development needs. These elements are characteristic of regular appraisals in many OECD countries (OECD, 2013^[23]). For example,

Mexico has a comprehensive teacher appraisal system that includes both appraisals for probation as well as regular appraisals for improvement, which together are seen as transversal parts of a teacher's career pathway (OECD, 2018^[24]). While not part of formal appraisal processes, principals in Bulgaria are obliged to observe teachers in the classroom on a periodic basis. This obligation is consistent with the country's vision of principals as pedagogical leaders (see Chapter 4). However, principals reportedly face challenges evaluating teachers and receive no preparation or support on how to translate their classroom observations into feedback that helps teachers develop their professional competencies (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[10]). Specifically, there are no common observation grids, annotated videos or other tools that can help school principals form a valid perspective on teacher performance.

School-based appraisal for additional remuneration takes place annually, which is not common in other countries

Bulgaria has a long-standing evaluation of “achieved results of work” to grant teachers additional remuneration on a yearly basis. The school's pedagogical council (or the principal if the school has under 10 teachers) establishes a commission to award teachers up to 100 points based on 10 regulated criteria. This appraisal process does not necessarily reinforce the most important areas of teaching knowledge and skill: the criteria overlap with but are distinct from the contents of teachers' professional profile and schools can decide on which criteria to use and adjust the points awarded for each. In addition, there are issues with the fairness of the criteria and appraisal process, which is a common problem with performance-based rewards schemes of this type (OECD, 2013^[23]). One criterion, for example, relates to whether teachers have students who participated and won prizes in competitions like academic Olympiads. Schools may opt to award more points for that, which would be unfair to teachers who work with disadvantaged students. Schools also have the discretion to determine how to assess the criteria and do not receive any training or guidance on how to do so fairly and consistently. In contrast, OECD countries more commonly reward teachers' performance by connecting salary increases to career progression after conducting an appraisal for promotion (OECD, 2013^[23]). This approach can help align teacher rewards with national education goals, such as encouraging the use of formative assessment and student-centred instruction.

Policy issues

Bulgaria has introduced reforms to attract new teachers and develop teachers' competencies in line with changing expectations for their role and a shift towards more student-centred methods. Many of these reforms have significant financial implications for the Bulgarian government, such as major salary increases and the elimination of tuition fees for students in initial teacher education. If Bulgaria does not link these investments to structural policies that help recruit the best and most motivated teacher candidates, as well as encourage practising teachers to develop their competencies, it is unlikely they will contribute to overall improvements in teaching and learning. To ensure the success of these reforms, Bulgaria should differentiate the professional profile according to the stages of the teacher career structure and use this profile as the basis for the appraisal for career progression and a regular, formative appraisal process that gives teachers feedback on their practices. This will help to steer changes in teaching to improve student learning and motivate teachers to develop relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. To address current and forecasted teacher shortages, Bulgaria will not only need to financially invest in new teachers but also work with higher education institutions to better prepare them, for example by introducing a summative appraisal of new teachers' performance and providing induction support. This can help raise the quality of future teaching cohorts.

Policy issue 3.1. Ensuring that appraisals support teachers' ongoing development

Bulgaria has already achieved a major step by establishing a professional profile that provides a shared language around expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do. These standards can help inform teachers' self-evaluations and continuous professional development. However, the professional profile does not relate to the teacher career path, nor does it serve as the main criteria to appraise teachers' performance for career progression. Bulgaria should differentiate the professional profile by career level and make the attestation appraisal more consistent and reliable. This will help reward teachers for developing their competencies and therefore leverage public funds to improve teaching quality. Bulgaria also needs to make changes to the in-school appraisal of teachers, as the annual appraisal for performance-based bonuses lacks objectivity and these funds could be spent in other ways to strengthen teaching practices, especially since teacher salaries have been increased. Furthermore, principals' regular observations of teachers are not treated as an important appraisal process. For example, principals receive no preparation or support on how to evaluate or provide feedback to their staff. Bulgaria should instead make regular, school-based appraisal an essential lever to support teachers' development, as it is in many OECD countries (OECD, 2013^[23]). Working with teachers to develop these reforms can help build support for these changes. Bulgaria might also consider establishing a professional self-regulatory body to take responsibility for the professional profile and oversee the attestation appraisal process.

Recommendation 3.1.1. Revise the professional profile for teachers to support appraisal and motivate development throughout a teacher's career

While it is positive that Bulgaria has introduced professional teacher standards and is working to establish a merit-based career structure, some design features of these policies limit their potential to motivate teachers to update their skills, knowledge and practice. In particular, Bulgaria's professional profile does not define the specific competencies teachers are expected to develop for each stage of their careers and the career path itself does not meaningfully distinguish between the functions of senior and chief teachers, nor offer substantial salary increases over time. Another design issue is that the competencies for trainee teachers do not relate to the professional profile. To address these concerns, Bulgaria should create a professional profile that defines the competencies teachers need at each stage of their careers, from new entrant to chief teacher. This would help fulfil the country's goal of creating a unified and consistent system for teachers' initial and continuous development (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014^[3]). It would also clearly communicate what competencies teachers need to develop and demonstrate in their attestation appraisals to show that they are meeting expectations or are ready for promotion. Performance-based career progression and associated salary increases can help the Bulgarian government further leverage its increased investment in teachers to make real improvements in the education system. Importantly, working with teachers and key stakeholders to make these revisions would ensure they are feasible, as well as encourage greater understanding and ownership over the professional profile.

Identify the competencies teachers will need to be promoted and take on responsibilities at higher levels of the career path

Bulgaria should revise the professional profile to define the competencies teachers need to acquire and demonstrate to move up the career path. For example, while new teachers need to know how to plan lessons that enable diverse groups of students to achieve national learning outcomes, more experienced teachers would need to do this with a greater level of confidence, flexibly adapt their lessons and produce detailed records to inform subsequent planning. More experienced teachers may also need different sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes to serve as mentors, organise professional development for teachers

and take on other responsibilities to support teaching and learning in their schools. Importantly, the revised professional profile should link to the teacher career structure, which is not currently the case since Bulgaria's standards present a general set of competencies that apply to all teachers.

The teacher career path should distinguish more clearly between the functions of senior and chief teachers since many are the same or overlap. For example, senior and chief teachers are both responsible for developing the school curriculum (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]). To promote teachers' continuous development, Bulgaria should make chief teachers responsible for leading schoolwide activities and taking on systemwide roles to support improvement. This could include helping to co-ordinate school self-evaluations and serving as contracted external school inspectors with the Inspectorate of Education (hereinafter the Inspectorate) (see Chapter 4). In making these revisions, Bulgaria could look to countries like North Macedonia, where the government recently developed a clear progression between teacher career levels, responsibilities and professional standards that describe the competencies needed for each level (Box 3.1).

Review the salary progression over the course of a teacher's career to ensure that it is sufficiently motivating

It is positive that Bulgaria already links higher teacher career levels with higher pay. However, considering the country's significant investment in raising teacher salaries, it is important that the higher wages used to attract teachers into the profession link to progressive salary increases that also encourage teachers to develop higher levels of competency and take on responsibilities that require greater mastery throughout the course of their careers. At present, pay increases connected to different career levels in Bulgaria are not as significant as in some other countries. Furthermore, the majority of the increases can occur within a teacher's first 15 years of service, which is a short amount of time. The Ministry could work with the teachers' unions and relevant stakeholders to review the salary structure with the aim of ensuring that salary steps for each career level are sufficiently rewarding. In the long term, Bulgaria might consider adding another level to the career structure to give teachers more opportunities to obtain a significant pay raise well into their careers. In considering these types of changes, Bulgaria could look at countries like Kazakhstan, which has a five-stage career structure in which the highest levels are connected to substantial salary increases to motivate competency development and reward teachers for taking on new roles (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Peer learning examples from Kazakhstan and North Macedonia

Differentiated teacher competencies in the North Macedonian teacher standards

In 2016, the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) of the Republic of North Macedonia, with technical and financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), developed a proposal for a merit-based career structure with different career levels based on clearly defined teacher standards. The new career structure aimed to encourage and reward increasing levels of teaching competency with opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities.

The 2016 teacher standards differentiate between a set of values and core professional competencies expected from all teachers and competencies expected from teachers at different levels in the career structure, such as teacher-mentors and teacher-advisors (see table below).

	Teacher-mentor	Teacher-advisor
Responsibilities	Provides guidance and assistance to novice teachers and helps them prepare for the teacher confirmation examination. Also provides support to other teachers.	Co-ordinates teacher networks. Monitors and appraises students from the teacher education programme during their practicum. Contributes to school self-evaluation and

	Appraises the novice teacher regularly and provides feedback.	school planning.
Competencies	These build on core competencies and place a stronger emphasis on those related to the promotion of education in the school as a whole. For example, the teacher-mentor should have skills and abilities directed at increasing the effectiveness of the work of the school and the achievement of its objectives.	These build on both core professional teacher competencies and those of teacher-mentors. The teacher-advisor should demonstrate leadership aptitudes both in classroom practices but also as a key agent in the promotion of quality educational work at the school and regional levels.

Teacher career and salary progression in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan introduced professional standards for teachers in 2017, which also led to a new teacher career system in 2018. The standards establish and describe what knowledge and skills teachers should have at five different career stages: i) teacher; ii) teacher-moderator; iii) teacher-expert; iv) teacher-researcher; and v) teacher-master. Each stage is associated with salary increases over a teacher's base salary (e.g. 40% for a teacher-researcher, 50% for a teacher-master). Although career progression is still not linked to professional standards in Kazakhstan, the country plans to align these two.

Source: MCEC (2016^[25]), *Teacher Core Professional Competences and Standards*, http://www.mcgo.org.mk/pub/Kompetencii_standardi_za_nastavnici_ENG.pdf (accessed on 20 July 2021); OECD (2020^[26]), "Raising the quality of initial teacher education and support for early career teachers in Kazakhstan", <https://doi.org/10.1787/68c45a81-en>; OECD (2019^[27]), *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b8ad56e-en>.

Incorporate the acquired competencies for entry into the teaching profession into the differentiated professional profile for teachers

Bulgaria should create a "new teacher" level in the revised professional profile that sets out the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers at the beginning of their careers. At present, the competencies required for entry into the profession do not align with the professional profile, thus disconnecting teachers' initial education from their continuous development. In adding a level for new teachers, Bulgaria could look at the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which define competencies across four stages, from graduate to lead teacher, reflecting the continuum of a teacher's development (Box 3.2). Like Australia, Bulgaria should use the "new teacher" competencies to inform the design and accreditation of initial teacher education programmes, as well as the appraisal of new teachers (see Policy issue 3.2).

Box 3.2. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards) was the result of extensive research, a consultative process and analysis of standards by employers, teacher registration authorities and professional associations. After drafting, the Standards were tested in different situations across sectors of the education system, geographic locations and school types. They were then subject to a validation process that included online surveys and focus group sessions. Formally introduced in 2011, the Standards aim to guide professional learning and teacher practice in the country. They introduced what teachers are supposed to know and be able to do at different career stages, setting common parameters with the goal of improving teaching quality.

Developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), there are seven standards in total, which differ according to career stage (four levels). For example, a teacher needs to fulfil certain requirements in order to become a registered teacher after graduation or to achieve lead teacher certification. Below is an excerpt from Standard 1, which illustrates the progression of knowledge, practices and professional engagement of teachers from the graduate to lead career stage.

Standard 1: Know students and how they learn			
Focus area 1.3. Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds			
Graduate	Proficient	Highly accomplished	Lead
Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.	Design and implement teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.	Support colleagues to develop effective teaching strategies that address the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.	Evaluate and revise school learning and teaching programmes, using expert and community knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Source: AITSL (2011^[28]), *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/apst-resources/australian_professional_standard_for_teachers_final.pdf (accessed on 20 July 2021).

Make teaching experts responsible for revising the professional profile and other reforms, in consultation with practising teachers and key stakeholders

Research suggests that when teachers share responsibility for the development of professional standards, this not only builds their ownership of the standards but also incorporates their expertise (OECD, 2013^[23]). The Ministry has already conducted successful consultations to inform recent changes to teacher policies. It should continue this approach and conduct consultations with teachers' unions and practising teachers across the country to revise the professional profile and develop new competency levels. The Ministry should also conduct consultations with key education stakeholders to gather a broad range of perspectives from those who are knowledgeable about teachers' work, including initial teacher education and training providers, RED staff, school principals and representatives of the Inspectorate. Consultations should engage stakeholders in revising policies and processes to implement the professional profile, including the attestation appraisal, and gather input on support that would help them with implementation (see Recommendation 3.1.4).

The Ministry should identify a small group of experts who have a sophisticated understanding of ongoing professional development for teachers over the course of their careers and charge this group with revising the profile and managing the reforms to initial teacher education, continuous professional development and appraisal that this chapter recommends. These teaching experts could, for example, be part of a new or expanded unit within the Ministry's Directorate of Policies for Strategic Planning, Teacher Training and Qualifications. In the medium to long term, Bulgaria might consider establishing a professional self-regulatory body for teachers to assume responsibilities for developing the profession, including management of the professional profile. This would help to raise the status of the profession, which is low: only 18% of Bulgarian teachers who participated in TALIS 2018 agreed that their role is valued in society (OECD, 2020^[29]). In establishing this type of body, Bulgaria could look at examples from several OECD countries, including Australia, New Zealand and Scotland (United Kingdom).

Recommendation 3.1.2. Modify the attestation appraisal to objectively and consistently assess real teaching practice and support teacher development

Bulgaria's new attestation appraisal process lacks some of the key elements that research identifies as important to ensuring the integrity of appraisals that have high stakes for a teachers' career. For example, the appraisal is not conducted by external evaluators with no relationship to the teacher, nor is it based on consistent standards of performance (OECD, 2013_[23]). Without these elements, it is difficult to guarantee the fairness and reliability of appraisal decisions and to reward teachers for developing the knowledge and skills that are most relevant. Bulgaria should revise the attestation appraisal process to address these issues and require teachers to demonstrate how they are supporting the learning of all students. Such changes will help the country move away from a narrow historical focus on the top-performing elite towards a more inclusive system that supports every child to do their best.

Introduce more objectivity and externality into the new attestation appraisal process

The current design of attestation commissions, whose input has direct consequences on teachers' careers, could lead to conflicts of interest. For methodological experts in REDs, this is because they need to establish a supportive relationship with school staff to improve teaching and learning (see Chapter 4). For school principals and representatives of the pedagogical council, their proximity to the teacher being appraised impacts their objectivity (OECD, 2013_[23]). Importantly, these actors should have opportunities to provide regular feedback to teachers about their performance. The school principal's input, in particular, should also have a role in the attestation process since they are most familiar with the teacher's work; however, the process needs a greater degree of externality to ensure fairness.

To achieve this, Bulgaria should require that only impartial actors external to the school lead teacher attestation appraisal commissions or validate decisions made by local actors. Methodological experts from neighbouring REDs could fill this role. This would need to be carefully organised considering the already heavy workload of REDs (see Chapter 4). In the longer term, the Ministry could select, contract and train external appraisers to lead the attestation appraisal process. These appraisers could include senior or chief teachers and staff of central education bodies with high levels of competency in pedagogy. While this option would provide an optimal level of objectivity, it would also require significant time and resources to implement and may not be feasible in the short term.

Use the professional profile to appraise teachers' performance, including their use of student-centred teaching approaches

The Ministry should use the revised professional profile to evaluate teachers under the new attestation appraisal process. Specifically, appraisers should determine whether teachers are working towards or have achieved the competencies for a specific career stage in the profile. As presently designed, teachers use the professional profile for their self-evaluations and schools may draw on this to define their own criteria for attestation appraisals. However, this process does not ensure consistency across schools. By contrast, OECD countries typically evaluate teachers against common standards and performance indicators, which encourages judgements that are more consistent and focuses appraisal on the key aspects of teaching that matter most for student learning (Santiago et al., 2013_[30]). The Ministry should specify – in regulated procedures and the guideline recommended below – that appraisers should pay particular attention to teachers' use of student-centred teaching approaches when assessing their performance against the professional profile. Senior teachers and chief teachers should also provide evidence that relates to their additional responsibilities to support teaching and learning.

Add a classroom observation to the attestation appraisal process

Classroom observations are generally the most important source of information for appraisals because they offer a wealth of direct evidence of teaching practice that proxies of teaching quality, like portfolios, cannot obtain (OECD, 2013_[23]). Bulgaria should therefore make a classroom observation or site visit a required source of evidence for the attestation appraisal. This is not currently mandated. By adding classroom observations, the attestation appraisal process will benefit from multiple sources of evidence of teachers' work. This will help appraisers make a more authentic assessment of teachers' performance, which is particularly important given that the appraisal has high stakes for a teacher's career.

Revise the attestation appraisal and other pre-requisites for career progression to take into account the learning of all students

At present, the contents of teachers' portfolios for their attestation appraisals include evidence of students' progress towards learning objectives in the curriculum, such as the acquisition of key competencies and teachers' work with vulnerable students (Table 3.5). These are positive examples of evidence that rewards teachers for supporting the learning of all students. However, other sources of evidence may reinforce a narrow focus on top-performing, elite students, such as the policy that exempts teachers from taking the examination to complete one of the qualification degrees for career progression if their students performed well in academic competitions. To support all students in achieving national learning standards, the Ministry should:

- **Stop requiring proof that students have won prizes in Olympiads and other competitions for the attestation appraisal and career progression.** The Ministry should no longer require teachers to provide this type of evidence in their portfolios. Moreover, student success in competitions should not exempt teachers from career progression requirements. These sources of evidence do not support Bulgaria's goals of improving educational equity and inclusion because student success in academic competitions depends on factors that are beyond the teacher's control. They may also punish teachers with large shares of disadvantaged students who may lack the support or prior preparation to do well in such competitions.
- **Not use parental and student input for the attestation appraisal.** This type of input, which appears to be collected in the portfolio, should not factor into high-stakes teacher appraisal decisions because parents and students are not pedagogical experts with a firm understanding of the characteristics associated with high-quality teaching (OECD, 2013_[23]). In Bulgaria, there is also a risk that this input will be influenced by the traditional focus on high-achieving, elite students, increasing the pressure for them to do well on examinations and creating opportunities for parents' lack of support for new teaching methods to hinder the implementation of education reforms like the use of formative assessment. Parental and student input could instead feed into a more formative teacher appraisal process.
- **Gather evidence of the extent to which teachers are supporting the learning of all students.** The Ministry should require that teacher attestation portfolios include documentation of student-centred teaching approaches that support the learning of all students (e.g. via sample lesson plans, student assessments and student work). At present, this is not a clear requirement. Classroom observations should also provide evidence of the extent to which teachers have created inclusive classroom environments and are individualising instruction.

Table 3.5. Contents of teachers' professional portfolios in Bulgaria

Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists
<p>Art. 66 (3) The professional portfolio shall be compiled by the pedagogical specialist and shall include materials that prove:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The dynamics of the professional performances of the pedagogical specialist, as well as of the children/students with whom he/she works. 2. The results and acquisition of competencies achieved by children and students in the educational process. 3. Participation in the implementation of the policies of the institution. 4. Professional development and career development.
<p>Art. 84. (1) In the process, the attestation commission shall use documents, certificates and materials from the professional portfolio of the respective pedagogical specialist, which shall prove:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The achieved results and progress of the children or students whom he/she teaches, supports, consults. 2. The availability of diplomas and prizes from the participation in competitions, contests, Olympiads and others, of the children or students and the specialist, including certificates from parents, other teachers and students regarding successful learning and participation in the life of the class and the school, from children and students at risk, with special educational needs and/or with chronic illnesses. 3. Professional performances, professional improvement and career growth, etc.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2019^[9]), *Ordinance No 15 of 22.07.2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

Develop new guidance and training for a revised attestation appraisal process

The Ministry has already provided training and tools to support the implementation of the new attestation appraisal. For example, in the school year of 2020/21, principals could participate in training on “attestation as an assessment process – criteria, indicators, areas of attestation”. An ordinance also provides a sample attestation card, including descriptions of teachers' performance at three levels. Once the attestation appraisal is revised, the Ministry should develop a guideline that provides detailed descriptions of how to conduct each major element of the appraisal. Providing tools that help appraisers make consistent and fair judgements about whether a teacher is ready for promotion would also support the implementation of the revised attestation appraisal process. A particularly important reference for both the attestation appraisal and a new regular appraisal will be performance indicators and descriptors that relate to a revised professional profile. These indicators should describe what competencies appraisers are looking for and how teachers might demonstrate them. In developing these, Bulgaria could look at the North Macedonian teaching standards and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2), which both provide descriptors for different career levels. In addition, the Ministry should also revise the attestation card template to include space for descriptive feedback.

All evaluators involved in the attestation appraisal process will require training on how to contribute to and/or lead the appraisal process. This training should cover how to make reliable judgements about teachers' performance and provide feedback that helps teachers improve their practice. For example, Chile provided training to contracted external evaluators for its appraisal process (*Docentemás*) that included opportunities to learn about the different appraisal elements, review concrete examples of performance levels and discuss practice judgements with peers (Santiago et al., 2013^[30]).

Monitor the process for appointing teachers to the chief teacher role to ensure fairness

At present, a school commission proposes selection criteria and the number of chief teacher positions in the school to the pedagogical council that, in turn, proposes this to the principal. The principal organises a selection process if there are more qualified teachers than available positions. If a teacher's peers propose selection criteria based on their knowledge of the candidates, this raises concerns about the fairness of promotion decisions. In general, OECD countries do not include teachers' colleagues in decisions that affect career progression because it is difficult to ensure their objectivity (OECD, 2013^[23]). Bulgaria should thus pay close attention to how schools implement the process of appointing chief teachers. For example,

the Ministry could work with the Inspectorate to use external school evaluations to review this process when they check schools' procedures for appointing staff (National Inspectorate of Education, 2016^[31]). Depending on the findings, the Ministry might consider changing the appointment process to, for example, ensure that the principal and other members of the school leadership team are responsible for all steps, including determining the selection criteria and the number of positions.

Recommendation 3.1.3. Provide feedback on teachers' performance and support their ongoing development between attestation appraisals

While school principals in Bulgaria are expected to periodically monitor teachers' work (Government of Bulgaria, 2016^[32]; Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]), there is no regular appraisal process for professional development. This type of appraisal commonly involves appraisers who work in the school, like the principal or teacher's supervisor, obtaining direct evidence of teaching practice and engaging in ongoing, often informal dialogue and feedback with the teacher on their strengths, weaknesses and professional development needs (OECD, 2013^[23]). The feedback teachers receive from these appraisals can help encourage their self-efficacy, for example in using more student-centred approaches, and help them better understand and direct their own learning. As a result, high-quality regular appraisals can be an effective and efficient way to strengthen teaching and learning. Bulgaria should thus make an annual school-based appraisal a key tool to support teachers' development. It should be clear that these appraisals differ from the high-stakes processes that inform teacher career progression, which should have some degree of externality. School-based actors are well placed to conduct these regular appraisals because they are most familiar with the teacher and can encourage open and honest sharing of needs and feedback.

Establish a methodology for regular developmental appraisals

The Ministry should create a methodology for a regular appraisal process to support teachers' professional development. It should include the following elements, which are common to effective formative appraisal processes in OECD countries:

- **The professional profile as the basis for the appraisal.** Teacher standards are an essential part of an effective appraisal system because they provide a common reference point for both teachers and principals that establishes clear expectations, encourages consistent judgement and focuses the appraisal on key aspects of teaching that matter most for student learning (Santiago et al., 2013^[30]). Using Bulgaria's professional profile as the basis for the regular appraisal process would therefore be more consistent than leaving schools to develop appraisal criteria independently.
- **Multiple sources of evidence of teaching practice.** Bulgaria already has several sources of evidence that could inform a regular appraisal process. However, some sources, such as student test scores and competition results, could incentivise teachers to help high-achieving students excel rather than helping all students to learn. If Bulgaria wishes to include measures of student performance in regular teacher appraisals, this data should account for the different realities teachers face across the country (e.g. diverse student backgrounds or school location). Moreover, the regular appraisal should include direct evidence of teaching practice. Principals can do this by observing teachers' interactions with students and reviewing teachers' portfolios, which should document their work, as well as challenges and reflections on their practice (Goe, Biggers and Croft, 2012^[33]). As mentioned above, other sources of evidence could include parental and student input gathered through surveys. Using multiple sources of evidence in this way will provide an authentic picture of a teacher's strengths and development needs (Goe, Biggers and Croft, 2012^[33]).

- **An individual development plan.** While Bulgarian schools already create a continuous professional development plan for staff, teachers should work with their principals to create an individual development plan in which they identify specific goals to develop their practice, including goals for student learning and activities to achieve them. Teachers should develop their individual plan annually, taking into account the professional profile, results from self-evaluation and attestation appraisals, as well as objectives in the school development plan. A range of countries, from neighbouring North Macedonia to Viet Nam, use personal development plans on either an annual or multi-year basis to support teachers in strengthening their practice (Mcaleavy, Ha and Fitzpatrick, 2018^[34]; OECD, 2019^[35]). Importantly, these plans should be practical and easy to use, so that they do not become a compliance-based administrative task for teachers and principals.
- **Regular professional dialogue and constructive feedback.** Teachers and principals should have scheduled meetings to discuss the teacher's individual development plan at the beginning and end of the appraisal cycle. Principals should also provide constructive feedback to teachers after conducting classroom observations and reviewing their portfolios.

Issue practical guidelines, tools and training to support regular appraisal

The Ministry will need to provide clear direction to schools on how to implement a new regular appraisal process that supports teachers' development. This should take the form of an official guideline to articulate to different stakeholders the purpose of the new regular appraisal and each step in the process. While having an official policy on the regular appraisal will help establish this new policy initiative, its success in supporting teachers' professional development will depend on how well it is implemented. To support implementation, Bulgaria should also connect regular appraisal to school evaluation procedures. For example, the Inspectorate should check and provide feedback on schools' regular appraisal practices as part of school inspections and schools should use regular appraisal results at an aggregate level as evidence to inform their self-evaluations (see Chapter 4).

To support the implementation of the regular appraisal process, the Ministry should develop tools and resources to help principals make judgements about teachers' performance and provide constructive feedback on how teachers can develop their practice (Table 3.6). This material could be posted on line to make it easily accessible to school staff. In developing and sharing these tools, Bulgaria could draw inspiration from the AITSL's website, which offers a range of online appraisal tools and resources for schools (AITSL, 2021^[36]). Bulgaria should also provide principals with training on how to conduct regular appraisals. At present, principals are not required to complete any training on this or other aspects of school leadership, which could be included as part of the mandatory programme for new principals recommended in Chapter 4. Furthermore, it is important that both principals and teachers are given sufficient time to meaningfully engage in this exercise so that it does not become a purely administrative requirement.

Table 3.6. Tools and resources to support the implementation of regular appraisal

Tools and resources to support evidence gathering and making judgements about teachers' practices
A common appraisal instrument. This would identify indicators and descriptors in relation to each standard in the professional profile. It would allow principals to record a teacher's performance level in relation to each indicator and describe the reasoning behind the judgement.
Examples of what good teaching looks like. These could include videos showing how teachers' practices at different stages of their careers demonstrate the competencies in the professional profile, like the videos developed by the AITSL.
Examples of schools' effective practices for conducting classroom observations.

Tools and resources to support goal setting, dialogue and feedback focused on professional development

A template for teachers' individual development plans and guidance on how to develop goals (e.g. by reflecting on the professional profile, past appraisal results).

Tools to prompt discussions in scheduled teacher-principal appraisal meetings (e.g. about the individual development plan and teachers' learning needs).

A template for principals to provide written appraisal feedback. This might contain headings and prompts that help principals provide meaningful comments to teachers about their strengths, weaknesses, development needs and suggestions for ways to improve. This would provide a reference to track teachers' progress and provide the basis for input to attestation appraisals.

Examples of schools' effective practices for providing feedback to teachers.

A tool to identify relevant professional development to address teachers' learning needs. For example, this tool could automatically suggest possible professional learning opportunities based on the results of a teacher's appraisal. One example of this is the iObservation tool, developed by Learning Sciences International, a firm based in the United States (US), which directly links appraisal scores with professional development resources such as books or curriculum materials.

Source: Goe, L., K. Biggers and A. Croft (2012^[33]), *Linking Teacher Evaluation to Professional Development: Focusing on Improving Teaching and Learning*, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Washington, DC; AITSL (2021^[36]) (2021), *Explore All Our Tools and Resources*, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources> (accessed on 9 July 2021).

Recommendation 3.1.4. Use a more objective process to reward teachers for their performance

A unique feature of the Bulgarian school system is an annual assessment of teachers that results in a performance-based reward. This “additional labour remuneration” is a long-standing supplement to teacher salaries. However, since Bulgaria has significantly increased teacher pay and may need to continue doing so over time, now is an opportune moment to evaluate how the funds allocated to the additional labour remuneration could be used more effectively and efficiently. In the short term, for example, Bulgaria might redirect funds to incentivise teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools or high-demand subject areas. In the medium to longer term, once teachers are rewarded for their performance through promotion to a higher career level (i.e. with significantly higher salaries for the top categories), there may no longer be a need for this policy and funds could be spent in other ways to support teachers in improving their practice.

Consider ending the annual assessment for additional labour remuneration

Compared to the annual assessment for additional labour remuneration, Bulgaria's attestation appraisal offers a more consistent and objective process for rewarding teachers' performance, especially once revised as recommended above. For example, while criteria for the annual assessment for additional labour remuneration are regulated, a commission of the teacher's peers or their principal (in small schools) can adjust the points to be awarded for each criterion (up to a maximum of 20% of the total) and has total discretion to determine how decisions are made (Ministry of Education and Science, 2017^[37]). To make the allocation of rewards more objective, Bulgaria should consider alternative ways to incentivise teachers.

Bulgaria's ultimate goal should be to establish a professional career structure that rewards teachers for their performance through promotion to higher career levels. Importantly, these higher career levels will need to be associated with substantial raises that extend well into a teacher's career so that they do not reach a maximum salary within too short a period. This system will likely take several years to fully implement, at which time Bulgaria might consider discontinuing the annual assessment for additional labour remuneration altogether. There may be resistance to this change and the government should work with the teachers' unions to carefully plan for the transition. In the short term, Bulgaria should consider adjusting the additional labour remuneration scheme so that it not only rewards individual teachers but helps address broader educational challenges. For example, redirecting funds to motivate teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools or teach subject areas in high demand (see Recommendation 3.2.2. Make sure

that the best candidates become teachers and fill shortage areas) could provide incentives to individual teachers while simultaneously addressing Bulgaria's teacher allocation issues.

Policy issue 3.2. Meeting the demand for new teachers and supporting their development

Bulgaria is recruiting a large number of new teachers to replace the ageing teaching population. To ensure these new entrants have a positive impact on student learning, they will need high-quality training and support to teach effectively in the classroom. The Ministry has already introduced reforms to improve the initial preparation of teachers, namely by establishing a common initial teacher education framework with a guaranteed number of hours of study in key areas. This is a positive development since it ensures all new teachers, regardless of where they complete their studies, will have a minimum level of exposure to important topics like pedagogy and inclusive education. However, teacher trainees are still not sufficiently prepared in the student-centred approaches needed for Bulgaria's school curriculum, which was a major impetus behind the creation of the Increasing the Competencies of Teachers Who Prepare Future Teachers programme. This programme aims to help providers update their initial teacher education curricula to better address modern teaching approaches.

As a priority, Bulgaria should introduce additional measures to improve the quality and relevance of initial teacher education programmes and establish a minimum threshold for admission. Bulgaria will need to make sure that the bar for entry is not too restrictive, at least in the short term, considering the ongoing demand for new teachers. Without managing the supply and demand of teachers, as well as providing incentives for teachers to work in harder-to-staff regions of the country and teach subject areas facing shortages, Bulgaria will likely continue to struggle to address inequities in the education system and improve teacher quality. To address the latter, Bulgaria should also make sure that all newly employed teachers get the support they need to meet the demands of their job. At present, not all new teachers receive a mentor, even though schools are required to provide one, and mentors themselves do not receive training and support for their role.

Recommendation 3.2.1. Make sure that initial teacher education programmes help teachers develop the competencies they will need at the start of their careers

Bulgaria recently amended an ordinance to increase the number of hours devoted to compulsory subjects in initial teacher education (e.g. pedagogy, inclusion) and identify the competencies teacher trainees should acquire, including competencies related to the delivery of the school curriculum. However, the extent to which these amendments will influence initial teacher education programmes is unclear, as earlier efforts to establish a common framework of core content for initial teacher education reportedly did not make an appreciable difference to programme design. Furthermore, Bulgaria's initial teacher education programme accreditation process is based on criteria that are applicable to all higher education programmes in all professional fields, meaning that providers do not have to demonstrate on a regular basis that their programmes meet requirements specific to the teaching profession. Bulgaria should now do more to ensure that initial teacher preparation actually changes. This will mean introducing more relevant quality assurance measures and further supporting improvements to the design of the initial teacher education programme curriculum and the practical-applied examination.

Make accreditation requirements specific to initial teacher education

Bulgaria should amend the accreditation criteria for initial teacher education programmes to ensure that programmes conform to the ordinance on requirements for the professional qualification of "teacher". This ordinance sets out the core content framework and the basic structure of the practical-applied examination

trainee teachers must pass at the end of their programme. Accreditation criteria should also establish requirements for programme outcomes that are specific to teaching. Specifically, the criteria should describe what trainee teachers should know and be able to do by graduation, as set out in “new teacher” competencies that are part of a revised professional profile (see Recommendation 3.1.1). Providers would then need to demonstrate how their programme curricula and assessments, including the practical-applied examination, will address and evaluate these competencies. This use of teacher standards for accreditation is consistent with practices in many education systems, including Australia, Estonia, Ireland and several states in the US (OECD, 2019^[38]). In Bulgaria, it should spur changes to programmes to help raise the quality of initial teacher education.

Establish a working group to help initial teacher education providers redesign their programmes and make other recommendations to improve initial teacher preparation

The reported lack of changes to initial teacher education curricula after Bulgaria’s introduction of a regulated framework of core content indicates that providers need more support to redesign their programmes. The Ministry’s new Increasing the Competencies of Teachers Who Prepare Future Teachers programme should provide this type of support. However, Bulgaria should expand on and further engage participants in this programme by creating a working group involving initial teacher education providers, policy makers and key stakeholders to help providers make design changes to their programmes to meet new accreditation requirements recommended above, including requirements related to the core content framework and helping trainee teachers acquire “new teacher” competencies. Indeed, the “new teacher” competencies should serve as the basis for the working group discussions, as research shows that using teacher standards to inform ongoing dialogue and reflection in this way can have a significant impact on the design of programmes to improve teacher quality (Révai, 2018^[39]). Some specific tasks the working group should undertake include:

- **Developing guidance to describe how different programme types should prepare trainee teachers to develop the “new teacher” competencies they will need by graduation.** In particular, advice should address how the core content areas and practicum of initial teacher education should cover student-centred, competency-based approaches so that new teachers are prepared to deliver the school curriculum. In developing this type of guidance, the working group could look at the work of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) (now the New South Wales Education Standards Authority) in New South Wales, Australia. BOSTES developed a guideline to provide advice about how initial teacher education programmes should teach student assessment to help meet the graduate competencies of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Box 3.3). The working group could also provide advice on how providers could use their practical-applied examinations to assess trainee teachers’ acquisition of “new teacher” competencies. Furthermore, they could advise how providers could help trainee teachers understand the competencies set out in the professional profile. Programmes may, for example, create trainee teacher communities of practice to support collaborative learning about how to use the professional profile (Call, 2018^[40]).
- **Identifying additional requirements for the practicum.** In a positive way, Bulgaria has regulated the design of the practicum to ensure that it is of a minimum length and involves teacher trainees in classroom teaching and broader school activities and to clearly set out mentors’ responsibilities (Ministry of Education and Science, 2016^[41]). However, initial teacher education providers told the OECD review team that there are remaining weaknesses with the practicum. For example, it sometimes begins late in the programme and mentors are not well trained. The Ministry could address these issues by expanding the regulated requirements. For example, these could also cover:
 - **The timing of practicum placements.** More back-and-forth between practice teaching and coursework over the duration of initial teacher preparation would encourage greater reflection

on teaching practice and closer connections with schools. Bulgaria might also consider whether the duration of the practicum could be extended to provide even more teaching practice opportunities.

- **Preparation and guidance for mentors.** Initial teacher education programme providers should provide training, a guideline and resources that relate to mentors' regulated responsibilities. This will help to ensure that mentorship is a meaningful development opportunity for new teachers.
- **Reviewing the core content of programmes that prepare teachers of secondary subjects for possible revisions.** Initial teacher education programme providers told the OECD review team that programmes to prepare secondary subject teachers can be overloaded with too many hours of academic content and not enough pedagogy.

Box 3.3. Key elements of content on student assessment for initial teacher education programmes in New South Wales, Australia

In 2013, BOSTES, the former initial teacher education accrediting body in New South Wales, Australia, conducted a study to determine how the state's initial teacher education programmes were covering student assessment and reviewed the research literature identifying gaps in teachers' student assessment competencies in Australia. BOSTES then produced *Learning Assessment: A Report on Teaching Assessment in Initial Teacher Education in NSW [New South Wales]* (2016_[42]), which established 24 key elements of assessment knowledge, skills and understanding that beginning teachers should develop in their initial teacher education programmes. For example:

- Key Element 1: Beginning teachers need to have knowledge about and a clear understanding of how the NSW standards-based curriculum is constructed and how the various elements work together. They should recognise and understand the principles that underpin the development and implementation of NSW curriculum.
- Key Element 4: Beginning teachers need to know summative and formative assessment purposes and how the two can be brought together. They need to know how to incorporate both purposes for assessment into teaching and learning programmes.

Source: BOSTES (2016_[42]), *Learning Assessment: A Report on Teaching Assessment in Initial Teacher Education in NSW*, <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/c204171e-a570-4947-8107-dc934ab2f70b/learning-assessment-report.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID> (accessed on 21 July 2021).

Recommendation 3.2.2. Make sure that the best candidates become teachers and fill shortage areas

Bulgaria needs to take more measures to ensure the quality of new graduates from initial teacher education programmes. This should include the establishment of a minimum threshold for entry to programmes, particularly if the need to replace the ageing teaching population is not as urgent now as it was five years ago, as some stakeholders indicated to the OECD review team. This would help to ensure that the government is not funding the initial preparation of entrants who, in the end, may not be suitable for the profession. In the medium to long term, Bulgaria could further restrict entry to programmes by establishing higher admission requirements. This will help to make the profession more attractive to high performers (Hobson et al., 2010_[43]). At the same time, Bulgaria needs to address areas of acute teacher shortage. The government introduced a three-year Motivated Teachers programme in 2020 to train and support qualified teachers with no teaching experience, professionals from other fields and teachers who want to

earn qualifications in high-demand subject areas, to take on teaching positions in schools that have a shortage of staff or serve vulnerable communities. Now, Bulgaria could do more to incentivise experienced teachers to work in harder-to-staff schools or subject areas. Any decisions about entry requirements and incentives to fill shortage areas should be based on systematic forward planning to manage the labour market.

Work with higher education institutions to establish a bar for entry to initial teacher education programmes

The Ministry and initial teacher education providers should work in partnership to establish a minimum threshold for acceptance into initial teacher education programmes, taking into account the demand for teachers (see below). At present, Bulgaria does not have minimum requirements for admission, other than passing the State Matriculation examination. This suggests that intake may vary significantly across programmes and new admission criteria could include, for instance, a minimum grade in Bulgarian language and other relevant subjects on the State Matriculation examination for concurrent programmes. Albania introduced this type of threshold to improve teacher quality. As of the school year 2019/20, all entrants to initial teacher education programmes in Albania that lead to bachelor's degrees were required to have an average mark of 7.5 out of 10 in their combined upper secondary education and state *matura* examination results, which was higher than the marks required for other bachelor's degree programmes (Maghnouj et al., 2020^[44]). This type of policy can help to ensure that candidates have achieved a basic level of competency in key subject areas, which is ultimately important for student learning. Countries with strong education systems also tend to look for candidates with high levels of literacy and numeracy, strong interpersonal and communication skills, a willingness to learn and motivation to teach (Barber and Mourshed, 2007^[45]). In OECD countries, providers commonly use a combination of methods to select candidates, most often secondary grade point average, followed by other measures designed specifically for admission to initial teacher education, such as interviews, competitive examinations and standardised tests (OECD, 2014^[16]). Bulgaria could establish a higher threshold for entry to programmes over time once there are no longer concerns about a general teacher shortage. This will help to make the profession more attractive to high performers (Hobson et al., 2010^[43]).

Use systematic forward planning to respond to the demand for teachers and target specific shortage areas

Bulgaria has developed a new staffing database that keeps track of information like the number of trainee teachers, qualified teachers who are seeking employment and schools that have vacancies (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019^[9]). The Ministry could use this database to help identify and address specific shortage areas, including:

- **Introducing more incentives to attract experienced teachers to harder-to-staff regions of the country.** At present, the government provides teachers with funding for transportation or rent if their place of work is in a settlement outside of their place of residence (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[46]). Bulgaria could consider introducing additional financial and non-financial incentives, such as a salary stipend, career fast track or priority in transferring to the next teaching position for teachers who choose to teach for a minimum number of years in harder-to-staff schools. These types of incentives could benefit students by helping to attract more experienced teachers, in contrast to some components of the Motivated Teachers programme, which are targeted to individuals with no teaching experience.
- **Ensuring that alternative route programmes into teaching are selective and well-designed.** As part of the Motivated Teachers programme, Bulgaria has introduced shorter alternative route programmes that lead to teaching qualifications. The Ministry should ensure that these programmes are selective, with well-designed content and up-to-date faculty, as recommended for

initial teacher education programmes above. Highly selective alternative route programmes can produce effective teachers who perform about the same as teachers from traditional routes after two years on the job (Boyd et al., 2007^[47]).

Recommendation 3.2.3 Formalise the appraisal of new teachers and provide them with effective induction support

It is common practice across Europe for new teachers to undergo a formal summative appraisal at the end of an induction year (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). However, Bulgaria lacks a consistent process to appraise new teachers' performance against common standards. Instead, school principals decide whether probation is warranted for newly employed teachers and determine how to evaluate them for successful completion of the probation. While Bulgaria lacks a formal appraisal process, it has introduced induction support to support high-quality teaching in the form of mentorship for new teachers. If well-designed, this can increase new teachers' competency and job satisfaction and positively influence student achievement (OECD, 2014^[16]). However, the OECD TALIS 2018 study found that only 34% of young lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria reported having participated in some type of induction when they joined their current school (compared to an EU average of 46%) (OECD, 2019^[19]). Introducing an appraisal process based on the "new teacher" competencies in the revised professional profile and mandating an induction year will support the development of new teachers' skills and self-efficacy in line with the changing expectations for the role of teachers in Bulgaria. More standardised induction support will also help to retain new teachers, which Bulgaria has identified as a key challenge (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018^[18]).

Conduct an attestation appraisal of new teachers

As currently designed, teachers will not undergo an attestation appraisal until their fourth year of employment. Bulgaria should, instead, require all new teachers to pass an attestation appraisal at the end of a one-year probation period. This will confirm that they have developed the competencies that are appropriate for their career level, including knowledge and use of the student-centred teaching practices that align with the school curriculum. In the short to medium term, while Bulgaria is trying to produce a large number of new teachers and improve the quality of initial teacher preparation, it will also serve a quality assurance purpose. Specifically, it will establish a baseline that all new teachers must meet and provide a structured exit for those who prove to be poorly suited to the profession.

An attestation appraisal process for new teachers should consist of the same elements as the regular attestation appraisal process, as revised (see Recommendation 3.1.2. Modify the attestation appraisal to objectively and consistently assess real teaching practice and support teacher development). This type of performance-based assessment is generally used in OECD countries that require new teachers to teach for a probation period for full certification. In New Zealand, for example, provisionally certified teachers are assessed against teacher standards based on classroom observations, teacher self-appraisal and dialogue with their appraiser (OECD, 2013^[23]). Bulgaria, like Hungary and Poland, could make it a condition for promotion up the career ladder (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). Bulgaria should also supplement the attestation appraisal with monitoring within the school throughout the probation period. School principals should conduct frequent classroom observations and provide regular feedback to support new teachers' development.

Regulate a mandatory induction programme for new teachers

Bulgaria does not regulate specific mentorship requirements or any other induction support for new teachers. This lack of regulation is associated with lower participation rates in induction in European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021^[4]). Bulgaria should:

- **Identify the key elements of an induction programme and who will provide them.** Bulgaria should define the responsibilities of mentors of new teachers in much the same way that the duties of mentors of trainee teachers are set out in regulations. In addition, Bulgaria might consider introducing other induction support that is common in European countries, like structured, school-based collegial support (e.g. scheduled dialogue with the principal and colleagues, assistance with lesson planning and assessment) and professional development activities like courses or seminars (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018^[18]). REDs in Bulgaria could plan and monitor the implementation of the induction programme, while principals could manage the implementation of induction in their schools.
- **Provide mandatory training, a guideline and ongoing support to all mentors.** A pillar of Bulgaria's induction support should be mentorship provided by senior teachers who are trained and well-supported. The Ministry should develop free mandatory training to all teachers selected to be mentors. This could take the form of a practical seminar that covers content like new teachers' competencies, how to conduct classroom observations, provide meaningful feedback and initiate constructive conversations to support new teachers' professional learning. A guideline should set out expectations for the role and provide practical resources for mentors, which could be developed based on surveys of mentors' needs and feedback from new teachers. REDs could also establish networks for mentors to share effective practices. Furthermore, mentors and mentees could have opportunities to receive training together, for example in student-centred, competency-based teaching approaches, as this should be a primary focus of mentors' support.
- **Confirm that schools are offering induction support to new teachers.** The Inspectorate's external school evaluations should check whether schools are providing new teachers with induction support like mentorship and whether they are of sufficient quality (see Chapter 4). If there are issues that result in guidelines for improvement, REDs should provide follow-up support to help schools address them.

Policy issue 3.3. Ensuring that continuous professional development addresses the learning needs of teachers and students

Bulgaria has introduced several reforms to its teacher professional development system in the past decade. These types of changes are having a positive impact on teachers' engagement in professional learning. For example, lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria reported participating in around 4 different professional development activities in the 12 months prior to the TALIS 2018 survey, compared to an EU average of 3.5 different activities (OECD, 2019^[19]). However, Bulgaria has a range of professional development providers and programmes and the current accreditation process for ensuring their quality and relevance risks leaving teachers with little information to navigate the system and access the support they need to improve their practice. Addressing these concerns and aligning the professional development system more closely to national education goals (e.g. formative assessment to improve student learning outcomes, inclusive education) can help Bulgaria leverage the significant public investment it is making in the teaching workforce. Efforts to support professional learning in school and on line can complement enhancements to the quality and relevance of formal training.

Recommendation 3.3.1. Enhance the relevance and quality of professional learning

Having a range of professional development providers can be a positive feature of an education system, as long as the training meets quality standards (OECD, 2005^[21]). Bulgaria has a large continuous professional development market with many providers offering programmes that lead to continuing qualification credits. These include specialised service units (i.e. state-owned bodies regulated by the Ministry), universities, scientific organisations and training organisations approved by the Ministry. As of

2021, 247 training organisations offering 4 431 programmes were listed on the Ministry's online information register (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[5]). Bulgaria lacks rigorous quality assurance and monitoring procedures to ensure that programmes are relevant and of high quality. A regulatory amendment came into force in January 2021 that allows participants to provide feedback about programmes on the Ministry's information register. This should help with quality assurance but does not replace the need for a formal mechanism that ensures programmes align with the professional profile and meet other requirements.

Bulgaria also needs to make better use of information to improve the relevance of training. The Ministry currently determines priority areas to include in the National Programme for Qualifications on an annual basis and, in 2020, the prioritisation was reportedly based on a needs analysis; however, it is not clear how this information was obtained or whether it is collected every year (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[5]). To maximise Bulgaria's return on investment in strengthening the teacher professional development system, the Ministry should explore ways to connect professional qualification degree programmes more closely to the competencies required for career progression and to address broader challenges, like allocating teachers to high-demand subjects. At present, higher education institutions make all of the decisions about the contents of professional qualification degree programmes and the Ministry does not accredit them. As a result, there is no guarantee that these programmes will cover essential competencies or support Bulgaria's broader education goals.

Conduct more rigorous quality assurance procedures

Bulgaria's accreditation criteria for training organisations and programmes address important areas. They require providers to demonstrate that their programmes are both practical and theoretical and that their objectives and methods relate to the professional profile. However, the Ministry needs a more rigorous process to confirm whether programmes are meeting these requirements. One way the Ministry can do this is by devoting sufficient staff to conduct accreditation reviews. These staff members should receive guidance to ensure that they feel comfortable rejecting providers and programmes that do not meet quality standards. The Ministry also needs a process for following up with providers if participants raise concerns about the quality of programmes on the information register. This could include conducting ad hoc inspections. At present, officials at the national or regional level are authorised by the Ministry to conduct inspections but the extent to which these are being conducted in practice is unclear. Any programmes that do not meet the Ministry's quality standards should lose their accreditation.

Systematically collect information about the learning needs of teachers and students to inform priority areas in the National Programme for Qualifications

On an annual basis, the Ministry should identify areas of teaching and learning that are most in need of improvement to inform the National Programme for Qualifications. When such areas are identified, training providers can then develop targeted programmes to help teachers develop in those areas. The following actions can help systematically identify priority areas for teacher development:

- **Survey methodological experts in REDs and principals about training priorities in their region or school.** Methodological experts work with teachers to improve their practices and organise continuous professional development, while school principals are expected to conduct regular classroom observations and develop a continuous professional development plan for school staff. These actors are generally well aware of teachers' training needs. The Ministry could require both groups to complete a simple questionnaire to identify gaps in teachers' competencies in relation to the professional profile and national education goals.
- **Collect anonymised attestation appraisal results, once available.** In the future, the Ministry could require each RED to provide a list of common competency gaps identified by appraisers in the new attestation appraisal process.

- **Triangulate results of attestation appraisals with results from external school evaluations and student assessments.** The Ministry should use the Inspectorate's annual analysis of the quality of education in Bulgaria, as well as the results of external student assessments, to identify weaknesses in teaching practices and student learning. For example, results from international assessments, the National External Assessments (NEAs) in Grades 4, 7 and 10 and the State Matriculation examination at the end of upper secondary can help identify weaknesses in core competency areas.

Make better use of professional qualification degrees to support teachers' growth for career progression

At present, the Ministry does not play a role in co-ordinating or overseeing professional qualification degree programmes. As a result, there is no way to ensure that these programmes prepare teachers to take on more complex functions and additional responsibilities at higher career levels. To enhance the links between the professional qualification degree programmes and career progression, the Ministry should:

- **Establish an external quality assurance measure.** Providers that offer training for professional qualification degrees should be required to demonstrate how their programmes will develop teachers' competencies for specific career levels. For example, the Ministry could introduce accreditation criteria to require that the content of these programmes reflects the revised professional profile for senior and chief teachers.
- **Expand the Increasing the Competencies of Teachers Who Prepare Future Teachers programme.** Bulgaria should consider expanding this innovative programme to include individuals who teach professional qualification degree programmes. Like initial teacher education professors, they also need a firm grounding in student-centred, competency-based approaches to education.
- **Work with providers to review the costs of programmes.** A significant proportion of lower secondary teachers in Bulgaria reported that costs prevented their participation in formal training (OECD, 2019_[19]). Although teachers are rewarded for investing in their learning, Bulgaria must still ensure that programmes are not so expensive that they discourage teachers from pursuing professional development and career progression opportunities.

Consider using professional qualification degrees to meet different needs within the education system

Given the high cost of teacher salaries and training programmes, Bulgaria should consider how to leverage the professional qualification degree system to not only strengthen the competencies of individual teachers but also support broader national education goals. Similar to the changes this OECD review recommends to Bulgaria's additional labour remuneration policy (see Recommendation 3.1.4), the Ministry could revise the professional qualification degree system in different ways to help prepare teachers for working in rural areas or to teach high-demand subject areas. For example, Bulgaria could offer three different types of professional qualification degree programmes that allow teachers to:

1. **Develop competencies for higher career levels and new roles**, as outlined above.
2. **Expand their skills within their existing career level**, which would provide teachers with opportunities to enhance their competencies in areas that are key to the professional profile, Bulgaria's education goals and school curriculum (e.g. formative assessment).
3. **Gain qualifications to teach different subject areas.** At present, the three-year Motivated Teachers programme provides teachers with opportunities to gain qualifications in high-demand subject areas (see Recommendation 3.2.3). Bulgaria might consider using professional qualification degree programmes to offer this type of training opportunity on an ongoing basis.

The Ministry could work with higher education institutions and key education stakeholders to explore how to implement this system, which would be similar to the additional qualification system in Ontario, Canada (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Additional qualification courses for teachers in Ontario, Canada

The Ontario College of Teachers in Ontario, Canada, was established in 1996 as the professional self-regulatory body for teachers. Its responsibilities include accrediting continuous professional development programmes for additional qualifications (AQs). There are five types of AQ courses, including some specifically for VET teachers. They include:

- Additional basic qualification courses, which lead to qualification in another division of the school system (e.g. primary) or specific curriculum subjects at the intermediate or senior level.
- One-session additional qualification courses, which cover specific topics (e.g. classroom management, mentoring, student assessment and evaluation, teaching combined grades) or deepen teachers' knowledge and skills in specific curriculum subjects.
- Three-session or specialist additional qualification courses, which are longer programmes that involve intensive study of a division or curriculum subject or lead to qualification as a principal or supervisory officer.

Approved providers of AQ courses include higher education institutions, teachers' unions, principals' organisations, district school boards and curriculum subject organisations. Higher education institutions must seek accreditation for their AQ courses, even though they have academic immunity and undergo a separate initial teacher education accreditation process. Providers design their programmes according to Ontario College of Teachers framework guidelines, which establish core content, learning objectives, instructional strategies and assessment methods. The college periodically updates the guidelines in a process that involves posting drafts online for input.

Source: Ontario College of Teachers (2021^[48]), *Additional Qualifications*, <https://www.oct.ca/members/additional-qualifications> (accessed on 13 July 2021).

Recommendation 3.3.2. Support teachers' collaborative learning in schools and online

School-embedded professional development, such as peer learning opportunities, can have a large impact on teaching practices and significantly reduce the cost of formal training (Kraft, Blazar and Hogan, 2018^[49]; Opfer, 2016^[50]). Bulgaria already has measures to support teachers' learning in the school. For example, teachers are required to complete 16 hours of an "internal institutional qualification" every year (i.e. discussions, methodological support, research, sharing of innovative practices and mentorship) and schools must develop a continuous professional development plan for staff, which draws on the school's four-year development strategy and teacher attestation appraisal results. These are all positive features of Bulgaria's professional development system for teachers. While enhancing the relevance and quality of formal training providers should be the Ministry's immediate priority, developing new measures to further support teachers' school-based and virtual learning is a cost-effective way to complement these efforts.

Support schools in implementing internal institutional qualifications to improve teaching and student learning

To build on in-school learning opportunities in Bulgarian schools, the Ministry could provide guidance and training to specifically support collaboration and peer learning among teachers. This support could focus

on methodological groups for a particular subject or grade level and the Ministry could implement these activities using a train-the-trainer model. For example, the Ministry of Education in Georgia trained facilitators in primary schools to co-ordinate teacher learning circles, starting with mathematics teachers (OECD, 2019^[51]). This model could cover a range of collaborative activities, such as peer classroom observations and providing feedback to other teachers to improve student outcomes. The Ministry could also develop online guidelines, templates and resources to help facilitators and teachers with these activities.

Further develop online peer learning

The Ministry has already established online platforms and networks to support peer learning among teachers. However, many of the teachers who spoke with the OECD review team reported using teacher-initiated social media groups to discuss and share practices with their colleagues and none mentioned the Ministry's platforms. While the Ministry's efforts to support peer learning on line should be commended, especially since so many teachers have been required to teach remotely in the last year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it appears that more could be done to raise awareness about the existence of these platforms. Specifically, the Ministry should encourage teachers to share lesson plans and examples of student assessments on E-learn (see Chapter 2).

As recommended above (see Recommendation 3.1.3) and in Chapter 4, the Ministry should also consider expanding E-learn into a platform that offers resources to support teacher appraisal and school improvement. What the Ministry could ensure, and something not guaranteed in social media groups, is that resources meet minimum standards of quality. The Ministry could, for example, encourage peer-review of materials uploaded to the platform. This is the case in Moscow, Russian Federation, where teachers upload material to a municipal platform and moderators review the content before it is shared as a resource (Mos.ru, 2016^[52]). A less formal peer-review process, whereby teachers can comment on or rate material on the platform, could be another way to ensure that the most helpful tools reach the greatest number of teachers. Furthermore, the Ministry should consider how teachers from innovative schools could contribute to online peer learning (see Chapter 4).

Table 3.7. Table of recommendations

Policy Issues	Recommendations	Action Points	
Ensuring that appraisals support teachers' ongoing development	<i>Revise the professional profile for teachers to support appraisal and motivate development throughout a teacher's career</i>	Identify the competencies teachers will need to be promoted and take on responsibilities at higher levels of the career path	
		Review the salary progression over the course of a teacher's career to ensure that it is sufficiently motivating	
		Incorporate the acquired competencies for entry to the teaching profession into the differentiated professional profile for teachers	
		Make teaching experts responsible for revising the professional profile and other reforms, in consultation with practising teachers and key stakeholders	
	Modify the attestation appraisal to objectively and consistently assess real teaching practice and support teacher development		Introduce more objectivity and externality into the new attestation appraisal process
			Use the professional profile to appraise teachers' performance, including their use of student-centred teaching approaches
			Add a classroom observation to the attestation appraisal process
			Revise the attestation appraisal and other pre-requisites for career progression to take into account the learning of all students
			Develop new guidance and training for a revised attestation appraisal process
			Monitor the process for appointing teachers to the chief teacher role to ensure fairness
	Provide feedback on teachers' performance and support their ongoing development between attestation appraisals		Establish a methodology for regular developmental appraisals
			Issue practical guidelines, tools and training to support regular appraisal
Consider ending the annual assessment for additional labour remuneration			
Meeting the demand for new teachers and supporting their development	Make sure that initial teacher education programmes help teachers develop the competencies they will need at the start of their careers	Make accreditation requirements specific to initial teacher education	
		Establish a working group to help initial teacher education providers redesign their programmes and make other recommendations to improve initial teacher preparation	
	Make sure that the best candidates become teachers and fill shortage areas	Work with higher education institutions to establish a bar for entry to initial teacher education programmes	
		Use systematic forward planning to respond to the demand for teachers and target specific shortage areas	
	Formalise the appraisal of new teachers and provide them with effective induction supports		Conduct an attestation appraisal of new teachers
			Regulate a mandatory induction programme for new teachers
Ensuring that continuous professional development addresses the learning needs of teachers and students	Enhance the relevance and quality of professional learning	Conduct more rigorous quality assurance procedures	
		Systematically collect information about the learning needs of teachers and students to inform priority areas in the National Programme for Qualifications	
		Make better use of professional qualification degrees to support teachers' growth for career progression	
		Consider using professional qualification degrees to meet different needs within the education system	
	Support teachers' collaborative learning in schools and online		Support schools in implementing internal institutional qualifications to improve teaching and student learning
			Further develop online peer learning

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