

THE SWISS-BULGARIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

THEMATIC FUND AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

**THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)
OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION**

AND

**THE MONITORING OF EU FUNDS DIRECTORATE
OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,
AS THE NATIONAL COORDINATION UNIT (NCU)**

AND

**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,**

AND

**THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,**

AND

**THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

ON

**THE GRANT FOR THE PROJECT "SWISS SUPPORT FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DUAL-
TRACK PRINCIPLES IN THE BULGARIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM"**

30TH OF APRIL, 2015 – 30TH OF JUNE, 2019

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SWISS FEDERAL
COUNCIL AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA CONCERNING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SWISS-BULGARIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME TO REDUCE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISPARITIES WITHIN THE ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION, SIGNED ON
7 SEPTEMBER, 2010**

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Swiss Confederation, hereinafter referred to as “SDC”,

The Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, hereinafter referred to as “NCU”, together with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, hereinafter referred to as “MES” and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, hereinafter referred to as “MLSP” and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Bulgaria, hereinafter referred to as “ME”,

Referring to the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria concerning the implementation of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union, signed on 7 September, 2010,

Considering the Swiss Grant for the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” in favour of Bulgaria in the context of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme,

have agreed as follows:

Article 1 Definitions

In this Thematic Fund Agreement for the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” (hereinafter referred to as the “Project”), unless the context or the relevant provisions of the Framework Agreement otherwise require, the terms listed below shall have the following meaning:

- 1.1 “Framework Agreement” means the Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria concerning the implementation of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union, signed on 7 September, 2010;
- 1.2 “Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme” (SBCP) means the bilateral Programme for the implementation of the above mentioned Framework Agreement;
- 1.3 “Contribution” means the non-reimbursable financial contribution granted by Switzerland to Bulgaria;

- 1.4 Thematic Fund Agreement for the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”, hereinafter referred to as “Agreement”, means the present Agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate, Council of Ministers, acting as the National Coordination Unit, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Bulgaria, which lays down the rights and obligations of the Contracting Parties regarding the implementation of the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”;
- 1.5 "National Coordination Unit" (NCU) means the Bulgarian unit in charge of the coordination of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme. In reference to the Framework Agreement, Art. 9, Bulgaria has authorized the Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate, Council of Ministers to act on its behalf as the NCU for the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme;
- 1.6 “Grant” means the non-reimbursable financial contribution provided by Switzerland under this Agreement;
- 1.7 “Contracting Parties” to this Agreement are the SDC on the side of Switzerland and the NCU, the MES, the MLSP and the ME on the side of Bulgaria;
- 1.8 “Project” means an individual project or a programme. A programme consists of several projects linked by a common theme or shared objectives;
- 1.9 “Activity” means specific assistance for, inter alia, projects, scholarships, partnerships and knowledge transfer provided within a Thematic Fund;
- 1.10 “Project Management Unit” (PMU) is the separate staff unit hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science, that supports the management and monitoring of the project, and the agreed activities as part of the Thematic Fund. The PMU will work under the supervision of the SDC and the MES;
- 1.11 “Audit Authority” means the institution established to the Minister of Finance responsible on the Bulgarian side for the control of the use of financial resources of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme;
- 1.12 “Executing Agency” means any legal public or private entity, as well as any organisation recognised by the Parties and mandated to implement Supporting Measures;
- 1.13 “Activity Agreement” means an agreement between the MES and the Executing Agency for the implementation of an Activity agreed upon as part of the Thematic Fund;
- 1.14 "Irregularity" means any breach of Bulgarian law, the Framework Agreement, this Agreement and/or related contracts as a result of an act or omission, which has led or could lead to prejudicing the general budget of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme through unjustified expenditure;

- 1.15 “Operative Partnership Group” means a nominated cluster of partners (schools, companies and other relevant stakeholders) with the task of supporting the implementation of the Project on local level. The Operative Partnership Group (OPG) will ensure the cooperation between schools and companies and will gather representatives of the professional school, the companies, local authorities, school’s board of trustees and students’ parents.

Article 2

Objectives and Scope

- 2.1 The objective of the Agreement is to support Bulgaria to create a replicable model and to build the capacity for implementing the dual-track vocational education in the country.
- 2.2 This Agreement channels the Swiss contribution to the Project aiming at reaching this objective.
- 2.3 On behalf of SDC and MES, a PMU shall manage the Grant and shall contribute to the implementation of the Project, according to the following documents, forming an integral part of this Agreement and listed by order of precedence in terms of legal applicability:
- (a) the Framework Agreement and its Annexes, particularly Annex 4;
 - (b) the present Agreement;
 - (c) the Indicative Budget for the implementation and management of the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” (Annex 1);
- 2.4 For all matters which are not settled in this Agreement the relevant provisions of the Framework Agreement and its Annexes shall be applicable.
- 2.5 In case of discrepancy between the provisions of this Agreement and the ones of the Framework Agreement, the provisions of the Framework Agreement shall prevail.

Article 3

Amount and Utilization of the Grant to the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”

- 3.1 Switzerland shall provide a Grant in Swiss Francs amounting to a maximum of CHF 3’000’500.- (three million and five hundred Swiss Francs) in favour of Bulgaria for the implementation and management of the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” as defined in Art. 2 of this Agreement. The Grant finances the implementation of the activities listed in the Indicative Budget for the implementation and management of the Project (see Annex 1). This amount covers also any possible taxes and fees due in accordance with the applicable law and regulations, subject to Article 3.7.

- 3.2 The Swiss Grant comprises of two components, as described in Annex 1. Swiss contribution amounting to CHF 765'000.- (seven hundred sixty five thousand Swiss Francs) is earmarked for the Endowment Fund for financing Activities (Endowment Fund), while CHF 2'235'500.- (two million two hundred thirty five thousand and five hundred Swiss Francs) is earmarked for the management and administration, including the expertise and consultancy (Management costs) of the whole project.
- 3.3 The Endowment Fund shall be operated by the MES and PMU. The Management costs, as stipulated in Annex 1 of this Agreement, shall be operated by SDC.
- 3.4 The Grant shall be managed in Bulgaria and its financing is considered as Swiss contribution in favour of Bulgaria.
- 3.5 The Swiss Grant for the management and implementation of Activities shall cover a maximum of 85% of the total eligible costs, born in Swiss Francs, to be co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science in line with the requirements of the Framework Agreement, Art. 5. This percentage shall never be exceeded during project implementation. The sources and terms of co-financing requested are presented in the Indicative Budget for the implementation and management of the project (see Annex 1).
- 3.6 The total value of the whole project implemented in the frame of this Agreement comprises of the Swiss Grant for the management of the project and for the implementation of the activities plus the co-financing secured.
- 3.7 Eligible costs include:
- (a) Management and administration of the project;
 - (b) Contribution for the preparation of projects by the Executing Agencies;
 - (c) Activities financed by this Agreement;
 - (d) Financial audit;
 - (e) Review and evaluation;
 - (f) Seminars and public events e.g. to launch the call for project proposals to inform on procedures, to assess and inform on progress;
 - (g) Swiss expertise and backstopping;
 - (h) Bulgarian expertise and backstopping;
 - (i) Publicity and visibility of the project;
 - (j) Reserve
- 3.8 VAT, which is recoverable by whatever means, shall not be considered eligible even if it is not actually recovered by the PMU, the Executing Agency or the final recipients.
- 3.9 The final date for eligibility of costs corresponds with the end of this Agreement as defined in Art. 21.6. Costs for reporting, auditing and evaluation can be considered eligible after the formal end of this Agreement but not later than ten years after the approval of the extension of the Contribution to Bulgaria and Romania by the Swiss Parliament according to Article 3 of the Framework Agreement.

- 3.10 Any unutilised portion of the Grant shall be eligible for re-commitment before the end of the disbursement period unless otherwise mutually agreed by the Contracting Parties.

Article 4

Payment Procedures

- 4.1 For the operation of the provisioned project co-financing and the Endowment Fund under the project, and upon entry into force of this Agreement, MES shall open a separate bank account. The accumulated net interest on this account shall be reported to Switzerland on an annual basis. Payments of SDC relevant to the Endowment Fund shall be made directly to this bank account. All payments from the MES directly to the Executing Agency shall be made from this bank account.
- 4.2 SDC shall execute payments relevant to the Endowment Fund based on the payment claims and related progress and financial reports submitted by the PMU through the MES. MES shall check the conformity of the payment claims and certify the correctness and legitimacy of the payment claims.
- 4.3 SDC shall execute payments relevant to the Management costs of the Project based on the payment claims and related progress and financial reports submitted by the PMU to SDC. SDC shall check the conformity of the payment claims and certify the correctness and legitimacy of the payment claims.
- 4.4 The MES shall provide the Executing Agency with advance payments depending on the financial capacity of the Executing Agency as well as on the rate of co-financing provided. Advance payments shall be proposed by the PMU and decided by MES. The initial payment shall amount to a maximum of 20% of the total eligible costs and shall not exceed 75% of the first year's budget.
- 4.5 Further payments shall take into account the requirements of the Executing Agency for working capital. The final payment of approximately 5% of the overall budget shall be made upon approval of Activity completion report.
- 4.6 Any gross interest accrued on the Swiss Grant must be indicated in the respective accounts statement and credited towards the next payment.
- 4.7 SDC informs the NCU at latest one month after the end of the year in question on the payments made under the Project. The payments reported by SDC shall be included in the annual reports on the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme as stipulated in Art. 8 of the Framework Agreement.

Article 5

Responsibilities of SDC

5.1 SDC has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Project. SDC, with the support of the Swiss Contribution Office in Bulgaria within the Swiss Embassy in Sofia, together with MES shall supervise and manage the implementation of the project. The main tasks of SDC include but are not limited to:

- Preparing and setting up together with the NCU and MES the Project Management Unit;
- Operating the budget for Management Costs;
- Hiring the PMU staff and supervising the work of the PMU through monitoring of the operations and financial controlling;
- Ensuring the steering of the project;
- Establishing, in compliance with the Framework Agreement and in cooperation with the NCU, MES, MLSP, ME and PMU, the Steering Committee of the project;
- Chairing the Steering Committee;
- Participate as an observer in Operative Partnership Groups;
- Analysing the regular reporting of the PMU, discussing the reporting with the NCU and MES and ensuring follow-up;
- Submitting to NCU information on the financial statements for payments made by SDC;
- Mandating the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and the Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce (BSCC) as official partners to support the reform process of the educational system in Bulgaria as stipulated in the Project Description (Annex 2);
- Mandating coordination and backstopping;
- Requesting immediate reporting in case of irregularities and ensuring follow-up;
- Assessing and discussing implementation progress with the NCU based on the reporting prepared by the PMU;
- Carrying out reviews and evaluations;
- Arranging all legal aspects required for the implementation of the project in Switzerland and Bulgaria ;
- Organising publicity and communication.

SDC may delegate part of these tasks to the Swiss Contribution Office in Bulgaria.

5.2 In the area of its competence SDC shall secure the management and implementation of the Project by the PMU in line with the stipulations of this Agreement.

5.3 SDC shall take or cause to take all actions within its field of competences and responsibility according to the Framework Agreement, including coordination and other measures, necessary or appropriate, for the use of the Grant in accordance with this Agreement.

Article 6

Responsibilities of NCU

- 6.1 The NCU is responsible for the inclusion of the Project in the portfolio of Supporting Measures and – on a general level – for the monitoring of the Thematic Fund implementation. The main tasks of the NCU are:
- Participating in the Steering Committee of the Project;
 - Monitoring the implementation of this Agreement on a general level and provide feedback to SDC on observations;
 - Commenting on project's reporting prepared by the PMU;
 - Commenting the audit reports;
 - Acknowledging the payments made by SDC on the basis of financial statements submitted by SDC;
 - In the event of irregularities, participating in the assessment of causes and solutions;
 - Including main elements of the project reporting in an overall annual report on the Swiss Contribution;
 - Discussing implementation progress with SDC/ Swiss Contribution Office;
 - Ensuring inclusion of the Project in the publicity measures on the Swiss Contribution.
- Responsibilities and tasks shall periodically be reviewed and amended, if needed.
- 6.2 The NCU shall take all necessary coordination actions within its field of competence to facilitate the implementation of this Agreement in Bulgaria.
- 6.3 In the area of its competence, the NCU shall collaborate with MES on planning co-financing in accordance with the Bulgarian national budget procedure, according to the State Budget Act of the Republic of Bulgaria. MES shall ensure the co-financing to the approved Activities according to the Bulgarian national budget procedure to the agreed amounts and conditions.
- 6.4 The NCU shall at all times clearly state that it is acting within the framework of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union.
- 6.5 Communication between the NCU and the PMU is settled in the Article 7.5 below.
- 6.6 If necessary, in the area of its competence, NCU may facilitate the process of checking for double financing and synergies with EU or existing bilateral programs in the field of vocational education.

Article 7

Responsibilities of the PMU

- 7.1 A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be set up for the administration, management and coordination of the project.

7.2 The PMU is responsible for the set-up and management of the project, for the preparation of contracts and supervision of the Executing Agencies, for the controlling of the Activities and for the reporting on Activities implementation.

7.3 The main tasks of the PMU are described in the Annex 2 and include but are not limited to:

- Develop and agree upon with SDC and MES relevant documents and Activities to be financed;
- Ensure the implementation of the Activities according to the Project Description;
- Manage and administrate on behalf of SDC the Project;
- Manage on behalf of MES and SDC the Endowment Fund, including nomination of project partnerships, processing requests for payments and managing financial transfers to be made by MES;
- Carry out the overall central operative management of the Project, including communication with schools, carrying out communication and other activities.
- Develop and apply, upon approval by SDC and MES, a project management system. Inform SDC on irregularities immediately and intervene, if required.
- Provide upon request technical assistance to the Executing Agencies and project partnerships;
- Participate and provide support to the presentation of the Project in the existing coordination mechanisms, reflect relevant policy considerations in the project implementation and ensure the link with other initiatives related to professional education in Bulgaria;
- Monitor overall Project and Activities progress;
- Inform the Swiss Contribution Office in Bulgaria and the NCU on the progress of the Project on a monthly basis;
- Ensure that a dissemination plan for completed products is being implemented;
- Draft an adequate financial and operational controlling system for project implementation to be adopted by the Steering Committee;
- Prepare contractual arrangements with the Executing Agencies;
- State at all times that it is acting within the Framework of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union;
- Report to SDC and MES. Reporting includes at least half-yearly progress reports and financial reports in line with payment procedures and requirements set;
- Ensure together with SDC, as part of the Management costs, the financial audit of the project, submit audit reports to SDC and MES and ensure the follow-up to audit recommendations;
- Ensure outreach and communication activities in order to inform the public about the implementation of the Project.

Responsibilities and tasks of the PMU shall periodically be reviewed and amended, if needed. A first review shall take place during the first Steering Committee meeting.

7.4 The PMU is primarily accountable towards SDC, which employs its staff and towards MES which contracts, together with SDC, the Executing Agencies respectively.

- 7.5 For the purposes of monitoring of the Thematic Fund, the NCU may, upon informing SCO, directly contact the PMU and request any needed information.
- 7.6 Tasks, responsibilities and obligations, including financial parameters for the service provided by PMU are further detailed in the Annex 2 to the present Agreement.
- 7.7 In addition to its role of management of the Grant and as part of its participation in the Coordination Group, the PMU may provide, upon request, expertise for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Professional Education in Bulgaria (2014-2020).

Article 8

Executing Agency

- 8.1 Legal public entities, schools, non-governmental organisations can assume the role of Executing Agency under this Thematic Fund provided meeting all requirements and approval procedure stipulated in this Agreement.
- 8.2 The main tasks of the Executing Agency include but are not limited to:
- Develop and submit to the PMU for approval Activity Proposals according to standards developed by the PMU and approved by SDC and MES;
 - Manage and implement Activities approved towards achieving objectives and results set forth and in full conformity with this Agreement as well as with the Framework Agreement and prevailing national regulations;
 - Co-finance the agreed amounts according to the conditions required for the implementation of the project;
 - Confirm and declare that the proposed Activities are not supported, entirely or partially, financially or in-kind by any other national or international funding different from the co-financing secured, before and after their submission for approval;
 - Report to the PMU based on the requirements set in the Activity Agreement;
 - Implement within their respective administrative structures, the approved Activities and assure the sustainability of achievements;
 - Report to the PMU and other relevant authorities for the implementation of the Activities in the agreed format;
 - Develop and implement a plan for the publicity and visibility of the Activity supported under the project and guarantee that the general public in Bulgaria shall be informed adequately about it and the support provided by Switzerland.

Article 9

Role of the line Ministries

- 9.1 The line ministries involved in this Agreement have the following roles:
- a) The Ministry of Education and Science will:
- lead the elaboration and promulgation of legislative changes deemed to achieve Project objectives, financial and institutional sustainability of the policies, services, initiatives and projects to be supported;

- host the PMU and integrate it in its operational set up related to overall management of funds and projects;
- request, as part of the Activity Agreement to be signed, a declaration from the Executing Agency certifying that there is no double financing of any part of the Activity by any other source of funds;
- sign the Activity Agreements with the Executing Agencies and SDC;
- provide respective part of the co-financing for the project as stipulated in Annex 1;
- open a separate bank account labelled in Swiss Francs (CHF) to operate the Endowment Fund;
- provide institutional support and adequate resources for accountancy and administration to support the PMU in the management of the Endowment Fund under this Agreement;
- in the area of its competence shall check for double financing of Activities supported by the project;
- participate in the Steering Committee;
- facilitate the horizontal integration of the Project with line ministries and other National and Regional relevant institutions.

b) The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will:

- provide expertise for the implementation of the Project;
- take active part in the elaboration of legislative changes, where deemed relevant, leading to meet the project objectives, financial and institutional sustainability of policies, services, initiatives and projects to be supported;
- in the area of its competence shall check for double financing of Activities supported by the Project;
- participate and provide support to the presentation of the Project in the coordination mechanisms and bodies, reflect relevant policy considerations in the project implementation and ensure the link with other initiatives related to professional education in Bulgaria;
- participate in the Steering Committee.

c) Ministry of Economy will:

- provide expertise for the implementation of the Project;
- take active part in the elaboration of legislative changes, where deemed relevant, leading to meet the project objectives, financial and institutional sustainability of policies, services, initiatives and projects to be supported;
- in the area of its competence shall check for double financing of Activities supported by the Project;
- participate and provide support to the presentation of the Project in the coordination mechanisms and bodies, reflect relevant policy considerations in the project implementation and ensure the link with other initiatives related to professional education in Bulgaria;
- participate in the Steering Committee.

Article 10

Steering Committee

- 10.1 For the Thematic Fund on the “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” a Steering Committee shall be established.
- 10.2 The Steering Committee shall provide guidance on strategic matters with a view to meeting the objectives of the Project and with regard to ethics, compliance with applicable law and regulatory policies, environmental safety, labour and health policies, financial practices, disclosure and reporting. It is responsible for overseeing management and ensuring that systems are in place to manage the risks involved.
- 10.3 The Steering Committee will be consulted in the organisation of reviews and evaluation of the Fund. The Steering Committee is primarily accountable to SDC and the NCU.
- 10.4 The Steering Committee shall be established by SDC, in collaboration with the NCU, the line ministries and the PMU. It may include representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the NCU and SDC. It shall meet at least 2 times per year. Representatives of the Administration of the President of Bulgaria, organisations of employers and employees could participate at the SC sessions as observers.
- 10.5 The presidency of the Steering Committee shall be assured by SDC. The Secretariat of the Steering Committee shall be secured by the PMU.
- 10.6 Rules and management principles of the Steering Committee shall be elaborated by SDC in consultation with the NCU. They shall be approved by consensus of the Steering Committee members at its constituent meeting.

Article 11

Selection and approval of Activity

- 11.1 The portfolio of the Project shall include Activities (project partners, budget and duration).
- 11.2 The approval of the Activities shall follow the procedure described in the Framework Agreement Annex 4, Point 5. MES and SDC shall conclude an Activity Agreement with the Executing Agency.

Article 12

Monitoring and Reporting

- 12.1 Monitoring shall take place at the level of the whole project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system” according to the document “Reporting, Monitoring and Controlling” agreed by both parties and at Activity level. SDC shall ensure monitoring at the level of the whole fund. The PMU shall be responsible for monitoring at the level of the project implementation. Articles 12.2 to 12.4 details monitoring and reporting requirements. These requirements may be adapted in the course of the implementation of the Project, provided changes have been accepted by the Steering Committee.
- 12.2 **At the level of the whole Project**, the PMU will inform SDC, NCU, MES and the members of the Steering Committee via regular operational and financial reports, as well as a completion report about management activities and progress made in the Activities, including the experience gained through implementing the Project.
- a. **Yearly Plans of Operations** for the Project and related budget proposals for the next year are drafted and submitted to both SDC and MES at least three months before the next year;
 - b. **Mid-year Operational Reports** for the Project (physical and financial progress) with annexes are submitted to both SDC and MES;
 - c. **Annual reports** for the Project that allow to assess periodically the status of achievement of the proposed objectives are transmitted to SDC, MES and to the members of the Steering Committee. Annual Reports shall first provide information on management activities implemented during the reported period and financial progress of the project including a comparison of actual with planned expenses and a confirmation of financing. Second, the reports shall cover the progress in the implementation of Activities supported under the project and their respective results. Finally, the reports shall assess the overall project achievements;
 - d. The **Completion Report** for the Project shall include also “lessons learnt”.

Mid-year Operational Reports and Annual Reports, respectively the Completion Report concerning the Project, shall be transmitted to both SDC and MES by the PMU no later than 3 months, respectively no later than 6 months, after expiry of the given reporting period.

Reports at the level of the Activities shall support evidence for the payment from SDC to the PMU for management cost as well as to MLSP for the Endowment Fund.

12.3 **At the level of the Activity**, each Executing Agency in charge of implementation shall submit at least **annual reports** and a **final report** to the PMU providing information about timeliness and progress made in implementing the respective Activity and covering all the expenses and revenues of the Activity from both the Bulgarian and the Swiss partners involved. The financial part of the report will compare expenditures with the approved budgets, including the co-financing share. Reports will also be checked against the guidelines established at the start of the Activity by the PMU.

Reports at Activity level shall support evidence for the payment from the PMU, respectively MES to the Executing Agency for financing the Activity. It shall also be the base for mobilising, respectively accounting for the co-financing from the respective Bulgarian institution.

12.4 Regarding the **financial control**, the responsibility for the proper management of funds lies first with the Executing Agency. The Executing Agency must ensure that expenditures reflect the realities and are consistent with the work done. Then, the PMU controls the financial reports of the Activity first in connection with Activity progress and also on the basis of the supporting documents (receipts, invoices, contracts, reports, etc.) attached to the reports.

12.5 SDC and the MES shall be kept informed by the PMU and by the Executing Agency at any time about relevant events and incidents.

Article 13

Financial audits

13.1 Financial audits shall be carried out by an accredited international or national audit organisation. The audit reports shall be forwarded by SDC to the NCU and MES.

13.2 The Audit Authority can perform specific audits to public institutions at the request of SDC or NCU at the expenses of this Thematic Fund.

13.3 Alleged cases of irregularities shall be investigated by SDC in cooperation with the NCU.

Article 14

Right of Examination

SDC, as well as any third party appointed by it to act on behalf of SDC, shall have the right to conduct a comprehensive assessment or review of the activities implemented under the Project, and shall be granted full access to all documents and information related to its implementation settled by this Agreement, during its implementation and after its completion. The PMU, MES and the Executing Agency shall, upon request, ensure that the representative of SDC, as well as of any third party appointed by it, are accompanied by the relevant personnel and are provided with the necessary assistance.

Article 15

Settlement of Disputes

If any dispute which may result from the application of this Agreement occurs, Article 11.2 of the Framework Agreement shall be applied.

Article 16

Common Concern

The Contracting Parties share a common concern in accordance with Article 10 of the Framework Agreement.

Article 17

Irregularities Clause

17.1 In case of irregularities, wilfully or negligently caused by a partner regarding the execution of this Agreement and annexes thereto, Switzerland and/or Bulgaria is entitled to:

- a) immediately stop payment related to the Project, to the PMU, MES and to the Executing Agency from the Swiss Contribution and from Bulgarian sources;
- b) ask reimbursements of wrongly paid amounts related to the Project at any stage of the activities.

17.2 Prior to making such a decision on Article 17.1, SDC shall enter into a dialogue with the NCU to ensure that it is based on accurate and correct facts and in written form communicate the reasons for their respective decision.

17.3 When proper corrective measures have been accepted by all parties the cooperation in the frame of this Agreement shall return to normality.

Article 18

Annexes

The following Annexes, listed by order of precedence in terms of legal applicability, form an integral part of this Agreement:

- Annex 1: Indicative Budget for the implementation and management of the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”;
- Annex 2: Project Description of the project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”.

Article 19

Language

All correspondence with Switzerland, including operational, financial and audit reports as well as any other documents related to this Agreement, shall be elaborated in English.

Article 20

Competent Authorities

20.1 On the Swiss side:

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Freiburgerstrasse 130
CH - 3003 Bern
Switzerland
Tel: +41 31 32 25 735
Fax: +41 31 32 41 696

Swiss Contribution Office in Bulgaria, Embassy of Switzerland
1504 Sofia, 33 Shipka Street
PO Box 132
Tel.: +359 2 942 01 00
Fax: +359 2 946 16 22

20.2 On the Bulgarian side:

Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate
Council of Ministers
1194 Sofia, 1 Dondukov Blvd.
Tel: (+359 2) 940 21 49
Fax: (+359 2) 988 23 65
www.eufunds.bg

Ministry of Education and Science
Educational Programs and Educational Content Directorate
1000 Sofia, 2A Dondukov Blvd.
Tel: (+359 2) 921 74 46
Fax: (+359 2) 921 75 74
www.mon.bg

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Labour Market Policy and Labour Mobility, Directorate
1501 Sofia, 2 Triaditsa Street
Tel: (+359 2) 811 94 29
Fax: (+359 2) 988 47 20
www.mlsp.government.bg

Ministry of Economy
Economic Promotion Policies Directorate
1052 Sofia, 8 Slavianska Street
Tel: (+359 2) 940 75 59
Fax: (+359 2) 987 21 90
www.mi.government.bg

Article 21

Entry into Force, Amendments, Duration and Termination

- 21.1 This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of its signing by the Contracting Parties and shall remain in force until all obligations under it have been fulfilled.
- 21.2 If either Contracting Party considers after having applied Article 11.2 of the Framework Agreement that the objectives of this Agreement can no longer be achieved or that the other Contracting Party is not meeting its obligations, it shall have the right to temporarily suspend the application of this Agreement by giving the other Contracting Party a written notice on the grounds.
- 21.3 This Agreement can be terminated at any time by one of the Contracting Parties upon a six-month prior written notice containing its justification. Prior to making such a decision, the Contracting Parties shall enter into a dialogue to ensure that it is based on accurate and correct facts. The Contracting Parties shall decide by mutual agreement on any consequences of the termination.
- 21.4 Any amendment to this Agreement and its annexes shall be made in writing with the mutual agreement of the Contracting Parties and according to their respective procedures.
- 21.5 Any increase of the budget, any significant changes within the budget as well as any strategic changes or conceptual adjustments shall be discussed with and approved by Switzerland.

21.6 The project “Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian vocational education system”, shall be operational starting from the date of the signing of this Agreement until 30th of June, 2019.

Done in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 30th of April, 2015 in five originals in the English language.

For the Swiss Agency for
Development and Cooperation



Denis Knobel

Ambassador

For the National Coordination
Unit



Tomislav Donchev

Deputy Prime Minister for EU
Funds and Economic Policies

For the Ministry of Education
and Science



Todor Tanev
Minister

For the Ministry of Labour and
Social Policy



Ivailo Kalfin
Deputy Prime Minister for
Demographic and Social
Policies and Minister of Labour
and Social Policy

For the Ministry of Economy



Bojidar Loukarsky
Minister

**Annex 1: Indicative Budget for the implementation and management of the project
“Swiss support for the introduction of the Dual-track principles in the Bulgarian
vocational education system”**

Overall Budget	Total Budget CHF	Swiss Contribution CHF	Bulgarian Contribution CHF
	100%	85%	15%
Component 1: Endowment Fund	900'000	765000	135000
Projects fund - support for professional schools	900'000	765000	135000
Component 2 : Management Costs	2'630'000	2'235'500	394'500
Know-how transfer and capacity building	1'980'000	1'683'000	297'000
Project management and steering	465'000	395250	69750
Audits, monitoring and evaluation	115'000	97'750	17'250
Reserve	70'000	59500	10500
Total	3'530'000	3'000'500	529'500

**Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme to Reduce Economic and
Social Disparities within the Enlarged European Union**

**Swiss Support for the Introduction of the Dual-track Principles in the
Bulgarian Vocational Education System**

Project Description

Contents

1. Background and key programming issues.....	3
2. Vocational Education in EU and Bulgaria	5
3. Objective system.....	6
4. Intervention strategy.....	8
5. Project Organization.....	20
6. Controlling, reporting and backstopping.....	24
7. Budget, contractual and financial arrangements	25
8. Timeframe table	27
9. Sustainability	28
10. Assessment of risks and potentials.....	29
11. Logical framework.....	32
Annex 1: Provisional list of criteria	33
Annex 2: Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce key competences.....	34

1. Background and key programming issues

In the Framework of the Swiss Contribution to the enlarged EU Switzerland and Bulgaria, as part of their mutual considerations regarding the implementation of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program, has agreed to invest part of Program's reserve and remaining funds for a project dedicated to introduction of Swiss vocational education model (or elements of the model) in the Bulgarian vocational education.

Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program (SBCP), worth CHF 76 millions, is part of Switzerland commitment to the cohesion objectives of the European Union in promoting the reduction of economic and social disparities within the enlarged EU. This bilateral instrument, governed by Framework Agreement signed on 7th of September 2010, is co-financing initiatives in promoting security, stability and support for reforms, improving environment and infrastructure, promoting private sector, human and social development. As a matter of principle Switzerland provides support in areas where Bulgaria claims greater need for catching up, and in which Switzerland can offer know-how and expertise. SBCP focus areas cover topics such as security and reforms, support to the civil society, integrating minorities, environment and infrastructure, promotion of the private sector, research and education as well as supporting institutional partnerships. Available funds shall be committed to projects and programs in the above focus areas by December 6th 2014 while project implementation can extend until December 2019. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) are sharing responsibility on conducting respectively Thematic Funds and Projects. A Bulgarian National Coordination Unit (NCU) constitute within the Council of Ministers is entrusted with the Program's steering, while Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) established as part of the Swiss Embassy in Sofia liaises involved Swiss and Bulgarian counterparts and follows on daily basis Program relevant developments.

During SBCP second Annual Meeting, conducted in mid-March 2013, Swiss and Bulgarian authorities agreed to explore the opportunity of initiating a project in the field of vocational education whereas Swiss know-how in the "dual-track education" model can be valorised and adapted to prevailing national context. This opportunity was further discussed during a high level visit to Bern of Bulgarian NCU (10-13.09.2013) hence the relevance of the project to the immediate needs of Bulgaria related to youth unemployment and SBCP focus areas was confirmed. Possible project related to adaptation and introduction of Swiss "Dual-track education" model in Bulgaria shall be financed by SDC under SBCP's Thematic Funds instruments in the range of up to CHF 3 million, plus 15% national co-financing. The project is expected to last 3 to 4 years and implemented in a partnership between Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and Bulgarian authorities mandated in pursuing national policies in the field of vocational education.

A team of two Swiss and one Bulgarian expert were mandated by the SDC to carry out a feasibility study and consequently draft a Project Outline, which served as a sound basis for the elaboration of the present Project Description. A full Project Document, including elaborated Logical Framework, Plan of Operation and Operational budget for the first year will be prepared at the beginning of the Inception phase along with negotiating Thematic Fund Agreement (TFA). The Project Description will become part of TFA annexes.

Key programming aspects, recommended by the feasibility study are as follows:

- The intervention strategy recommends a short inception component or phase, followed by interventions in the development of dual-track VET curricula and respectively their implementation in practice. A parallel training and capacity building component is envisaged to establish operational capacity for the project and its sustainable dissemination after the interventions.
- Stakeholders direct involvement, interface securing project's grass rooting at national and local level is highly recommended. This approach shall benefit from the experience of "Swiss Forum" approach widely introduced in Bulgaria during Swiss transition cooperation in the period 2000 – 2007;
- Introducing a new process of curriculum development should be a core element of the intervention strategy. The project would start with the development of curricula, following the SFIVET method. Bulgarian experts and institutions have to be trained in parallel to work as future multipliers in this field (multiplication);
- It is essential that the project builds up capacity for institutionalisation, dissemination and scaling up of the dual track VET in Bulgaria. The approach should be that the Swiss expertise is gradually transferred to the Bulgarian partners through trainings of trainers of three main groups: i) Dual track education experts with knowledge and skills mostly in curricula and syllabi development but also on pedagogy, didactics and professional aspects; ii) Master Teachers - with knowledge on pedagogy and didactics; Master instructors - with knowledge on the business/professions/technology/pedagogy, presumably from the business/companies involved. This is expected to ensure a critical mass and build capacity for the sustainable scaling up of the accumulated experience. In this process the instructors and teachers would undergo special trainings delivered by SFIVET;
- There is a need for advocacy and awareness building activities. Such activities should among others include coordinating the required Governmental support, initiating amendments in legislative acts, disseminating the positive outcomes of the project, and mobilizing resources from external funding such as Governmental, corporate and EU funding sources;
- It is observed that the image of the vocational education in Bulgaria is in general poor and the dual track system is not well understood in the country. The project should be accompanied by a strong communication campaign. Aimed at the public in general but also parents and students, such campaign should enrol both locally in the target areas and nationally;
- The direct partner of the project should be the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Ministries of Economy and Labour shall be associated to the project agreement and hence have a sit in project Steering Committee. Other "stakeholders involvement" forms shall be also endeavoured;
- A project management unit (PMU) needs to be established for the operational management of the project. MES seems to be the most appropriate institution to host at the PMU;
- The particular sectors to work in and the selection of the corresponding schools and companies needs to be carried out on the bases of selection criteria. In one branch there will be involved clusters of partners respectively one or two VET schools, a number of companies and possibly a branch association;
- The partner companies or/and the VET schools engaged in the project might need to be supported with financial aid for investing in training equipment and facilities or with

other incentives. The incentives, however, need to be directly connected to the implementation of the dual track system;

- A clear procedure should be established to determine sectors and the partners to be involved in the project - company(s) willing to apply has to be committed to assign their employees that will be trained to get the basic knowledge as instructors; to assign these instructors to the students; to pay to the students; to cooperate with the VET school etc.;
- For quality reasons the project starts with the development and implementation of a limited number of professions.

2. Vocational Education in EU and Bulgaria

Prevailing political context and situation

Regardless of dynamic political changes and ongoing political crisis over the last 2 years, the introduction of vocational/dual-track elements into country's vocational education system seems to enjoy support from all major political parties and governments. Significant push for these reforms comes also from the EU, where dual approach in VET is considered important ingredient in overcoming negative tendencies after economic crisis from 2008 and particular in curbing youth unemployment. Last but not least still moderate but growing market oriented business and industries are pressing the state to reform the education system to better respond to the dynamics of contemporary, innovations based production and marketing chains which require well educated, capable and trustworthy labour force. This drive is explicit for Bulgarian branches of German, Swiss and Austrian producers, representing the bulk of foreign investments in the country (machine building sector), which are used to or familiar with the dual approach in their home countries. It is yet less demanded by entirely Bulgarian producers although that in some labour/skills intensive branches (IT, textile, machine-building and wood processing) there are already some promising, but still isolated initiatives.

Despite of obvious political support and declared demand for introducing dual-track principles in Bulgarian VET system, there is no structured, consistent and consensual plan or strategy on this important subject. Some partial reforms, in the form of amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act were adopted only recently at the end of the short mandate of Bulgaria's 42 Parliament (June 2013 – July 2014). According to these amendments further elaboration of secondary regulatory basis shall be elaborated and enforced in 2015. Other changes, like the amendments into the Labour Code said to ease employment of underage pupils (apprentices) could not entirely materialise due to strong opposition from trade unions.

Ongoing national programmes for supporting vocational education

In the period 2008 – 2014 the Ministry of Education and Science has financed out of its budget a "National Programme for Modernising the System of Professional Education". With more than BGN 12 Million (6 Million Euro) this programme supports improvement of physical environment (machines, training equipment and other close to work facilities) of partnerships between professional schools and local business. The programme for 2014, worth BGN 3 Million of national financing and requesting at least 10% co-financing from the business partner(s), will grant support to 38 applications of professional schools for modernising their facilities. The programme is organised on the basis of call for applications open to all professional schools in the country that has partnership agreement with at least 1 business entity employing workers from the respective professions and able to secure within their production facilities practical education of involved pupils.

New EU Operational Programmes (OP) for the period 2014 - 2020

Significant emphasis on introduction of dual track principles is elaborated in still draft OP “Science and Education for Smart Growth”¹. Investment Priority 4 of Priority Axis 2 aims at improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes. Two of the specific objectives pertinent to this priority are directly related the VET system:

- ✓ Increasing the attractiveness and improving the quality of vocational education and training;
- ✓ Promoting links between vocational education and training, higher education, science and business.

To pursue these objectives the OP resources Euro 50 million for measures supporting the “...improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula, establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes”.

Both EU and National programmes are important contextual elements in which Swiss project will endeavour to mainstream dual track principles. Apart from tapping on existing experience and expertise and avoidance of possible double financing, these programmes are considered important resourceful ingredient securing the enforcement of the planned policy reforms.

In conclusion, the current project comes at very important moment whereas regardless of dynamic political context in Bulgaria, all ingredients for a successful, know-how transferring capacity building initiative are at hands.

3. Objective system

The vision this project pursues is a sustainable Bulgarian system of vocational school education, in which vocational education is tightly linked to the demand of the business. It is a vision, in which vocational schools are generating competent, knowledgeable and highly qualified workforce, able to respond to the immediate needs of the labour market. Within this vision the companies are seen as responsible partners to the educational institutions; they are motivated to invest in their workers and to cooperate with the State and local authorities. Dual Vocational Education and Training System (DVETS) is considered as one of the operational tools and entry point for the accomplishment of this vision.

The main goal of the project is to create a replicable model and the respective capacity for implementing the DVETS in Bulgaria.

To achieve this goal the following interlinked objectives are envisaged to be accomplished:

¹Upon the signing of Partnership Agreement (PA) with EU at the beginning of August 2014, Bulgaria will benefit of more than 10 billion Euro in the period 2014-2020. PA paves the way for investing EUR 7.6 B in total Cohesion Policy funding. According to the EC, the EU investments will help tackle unemployment and boost competitiveness and economic growth through support to innovation, training and education in cities, towns and rural areas. Operational Programs, detailing the means and targets for the period, must be finalized and adopted at the beginning of 2015 by the end of 2014.

1. Pilot a new approach in the development of curricula and syllabi in the dual-track VET system. As pointed out in the feasibility study report, the current system of developing the curriculum is based on a top-down approach. Current curricula are virtually detached from the business demand and stay behind the modern professional standards. The first project objective is to pilot an alternative model based on the Swiss practice, in which curricula are developed on the ground of the immediate working experience in the companies.
2. Practical implementation of the curricula in a complete educational cycle in a number of professions. This number will increase during the project implementation by enlarging the intervention scope to new professions and new schools in each project year. The process will embrace the full educational cycle starting with the very admission of the students (or rather with the promotion of the DVETS in the particular locations), passing through an educational phase dominated by general education courses, and then entering the actual dual education and training process, based in companies and vocational schools, and finally ending with a state exam for the students, involved in the project in correspondence with the requirements set in the VET Act. The process of going through the full education cycle is expected to demonstrate a model for implementing the DVETS in Bulgaria, which can be further amended and scaled up as part of the project or through other relevant instruments (national, EU, business etc.).
3. Building capacity for disseminating the DVETS in Bulgaria. There is a need for building up a Bulgarian capacity, which will be achieved in trainings and in the actual implementation of the DVETS in practice. The project approach is that the Swiss expertise is gradually decreasing during the project while increasing the responsibilities of the Bulgarian experts and project partners. This is expected to ensure a critical mass and capacity for the sustainable reproduction and scaling up of the accumulated experience during and after the project. In view of the new EU OP programmes which can become an important source for project scaling up and reproduction, close collaboration with management structures for these instruments as well as targeted trainings for experts, schools' responsible staff but also business structures will be initiated.
4. Supporting legislative changes for the implementation of the DVETS in Bulgaria. While there are currently available basic legislative conditions to launch the project, it is necessary that the legislative environment is improved, so that it better responds to the peculiarities of the DVETS. Legislative amendments and complements will be necessary not only in the educational system, but also in the Labour Code or in other legislative acts. A particular sub-objective of the project will be to contribute to the process of supplementing and modernising the "National Strategy for Development of the VET System 2015-2020" which has been adopted by the Council of Ministers at the end of 2014.
5. Promote a positive public image of the project and the VET in general. While there is currently a political commitment to introduce elements of the DVETS, it is observed that the image of the vocational education in Bulgaria is in general poor and the DVETS is not well understood in the country. Therefore a substantial input in a public campaign to improve the reputation and image of DVET is necessary.

4. Intervention strategy

The intervention strategy comprises of:

- i) Short (5-6 months) mobilization component (inception phase);
- ii) Implementation phase - development of VET curricula and respectively their implementation in practice. A parallel, rolling training component is envisaged to ensure operational capacity for the project and involved stakeholders its scaling up and dissemination during and after the interventions. A parallel policy dialog² and awareness building components will be endeavoured at national level while transferring field experiences (schools/business interface at local level).
- iii) Stock-taking and streamlining phase - towards the end of the main phase, a review or evaluation of the project is foreseen. This review will shed light on important context considerations (changes) on one hand and on the other draw lessons learned. In conclusion this exercise shall propose concrete steps towards leveraging the effect and impact of the project.

In addition the following are key **strategic considerations** which shall frame project enrolment and implementation:

Declared demand and creating working model with critical mass vs geographic focus

Schools-business partnerships to endeavour DVETS is a key for lasting project impact. Proactive, committed and demand based partnerships with potential to sustain (locally) critical mass of apprentices shall be supported despite of their possible location in “well economically developed” regions.

Clear focus with broad domain

EU and National VET priorities put a strong emphasis on lifelong learning, acquisition of additional professional skills and continuous training as a direct approach in improving on employability. Therefore the project design and implementation shall clearly focus and stay within the DVETS in formal vocational education.

Upgrade policy and legislative reforms based on concrete locally piloted experience or practices

It is very often the case that legislative and policy reforms are initiated top-down with little (time) and insufficient consultations with key stakeholders. Regardless of possible political context influence, bottom-up and participatory approach in upgrade policy and legislative reforms based on accumulated experience shall be mainstreamed throughout project implementation.

4.1. Inception activities

OUTCOME 1: MOBILISED PROJECT PARTNERS AND KEY PROJECT ACTORS

The project will start with mobilizing key institutional, educational and business partners as well as students and parents and with setting up (formal) operational management structures. During the inception phase the following activities will be carried out:

²“Swiss Forum” approach will be applied in articulating multi stakeholder involvement.

1. Negotiating and signing a Thematic Fund Agreement with Bulgarian authorities (MES, MOLSP, MOEE, NCU³);
2. Setting up and staffing PMU comprising of 3 full time employees (Team leader and 2 experts) with complementary expertise.

In similarity to SBCP “Roma Inclusion Programme”, PMU staff will be recruited and contracted by the SCO in Bulgaria. TORs and recruitment process will be consulted with MES. PMU will be installed within office premises of the MES. One of the first tasks of the PMU will be to get to know the prevailing context of the project, including ongoing National and EU instruments, to further elaborate/adjust on project Logical Framework, operational (annual) planning and budgeting. Operational modalities like reporting and accounting rules, monitoring and controlling system etc. that are required for the management of Swiss and Bulgarian contribution to the project will also be elaborated by the PMU during the inception phase;

3. Setting up supervision, backstopping and consultative bodies of the project (Details are provided in the Programme organization section);
4. Setting up a project Steering committee (Details are provided in the Programme organization section);
5. Setting up a pool of Swiss and Bulgarian experts.
 - a. There will be engaged experts from the Swiss Federal Institute of Vocational Education and Training, mandated by the SDC in Bern with the objectives to bring in the project key knowledge and skills about the DVETS through trainings and coaching of the Bulgarian experts.
 - b. There will be recruited by the SCO a number of Bulgarian dual track-education experts (up to 10) in the field of development and education, who will be trained by the Swiss experts and together with the Swiss experts will constitute the core implementing team of the project. The sustainability perspective of this team is to capacitate the scaling up of the DVETS in Bulgaria after the project.
6. Determining a number of professions to be piloted/trained in VET schools and companies, applying the DVETS.

Determination of the project professions will be made by the PMU and eventually endorsed by Steering committee on the basis of the feasibility study and suggested criteria (Draft criteria are enclosed in an Annex 1). There will initially be determined 2 professions to start the implementation process in 2015/16 school year. In every following year from 2016 to 2019 at least two new professions will be developed and added to the implementation process.

7. Nominating implementing partners, e.g., these are the respective partnerships between companies, professional schools and branch associations, related to the professions to be involved in the project. Each partnership group may comprise of:

³ List of Bulgarian institutions to sign will become clear during the process of TFA negotiation process.

- One or two professional schools enrolling particular student for the selected profession;
- Several (2 - 10) companies operating in the given profession, and respectively employing such professionals;
- One branch association or cluster, representing the businesses, engaged with the respective profession locally/regionally;

Nomination of the project beneficiaries will be based on expression of interest whereas proactive attitudes committed and demand based partnerships with potential to sustain (locally) critical mass of apprentices is demonstrated. An invitation to present a proposal will be addressed at 3 to 5 professional schools. Upon consultation with project SC and MES in particular, the final decision on project grant award will be with SDC (Draft criteria for nominating potential partnerships are enclosed in the Annex 1).

8. Defining the territorial scope of the project. The territorial scope of the project will stem from the location of the respective partnerships . It will ideally cover specific districts in Bulgaria, respectively bringing together the companies and the VET schools for each of the selected professions. It will however be possible that one profession is piloted in 2 districts if there are committed partnerships of businesses and VET schools from more than one district.
9. Conduct of the baseline sociological survey on attitudes and expectations from DVETS in the country.

This representative sociological survey, to be conducted at the inception and towards the end of the project will aim, among others, at: i) depicting expectations of main DVETS stakeholders in the country and prevailing public attitudes (with focus of parents but also pupils); ii) registering trends in stakeholders opinions on DVETS attributable to the project intervention and policy reforms. The survey will be conducted by scientific partnership established between the Bulgarian Institute of Sociology and Institut für Soziologie Universität Basel, which do conduct a project under SBCP Research Programme on **„Social disparities and regional differences in school-to-work transitions in Bulgaria“**.

4.2. Trainings

The training component will comprise activities, creating the capacities with three types of experts:

1. **Dual Track Education Experts** with knowledge and skills mostly in curricula and syllabi development but also on pedagogy, didactics and professional aspects (10 people). The quality of the expertise and knowledge acquired will be key in the selection of the trainees and in the design of the (continuous) training programme.
2. **Master Teachers** (at least 10 people) to acquire knowledge on pedagogy and didactics.
3. **Master instructors** (at least 10 people) mostly from business/production context to acquire knowledge on the business/professions/technology transfer at real working conditions.

The training activities will be carried out throughout the project with the strategy to start with a bigger commitment on the side of the Swiss experts and via a “training of trainers” process to gradually transfer more responsibilities to the Bulgarian stakeholders. This pool of experts is expected to form a “centre of competences” on DVETS within key stakeholders namely MES, vocational schools and business associations.

The acquired capacity will be accumulated largely at the MES (the respective directorates) and NAVET, but also among independent experts, who will be able to disseminate the experience outside the governmental structures, including in a situation of changing governments. In addition, local capacity among the teachers and the company instructors will be built in the respective schools and companies.

The following training activities will be carried out during the project:

OUTCOME 2: BUILD CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT AND TO SCALE IT UP

1. Training of Dual Track Education Experts. The training will be carried out by the Swiss experts with the objective to build capacity among the Bulgarian experts in terms of:
 - a. Knowledge of the Swiss DVETS
 - b. Knowledge and skills for managing the elaboration of curricula and syllabi for dual track education, applying the Swiss DVETS.
 - c. Knowledge and skills for training teachers at schools and instructors at companies.

The trainees will comprise a group of Bulgarian independent experts and governmental experts. This approach will aim at building capacity both on the side of the Government and on the side of independent consultants, who could be engaged in the implementation of the project and can be later recruited for the dissemination of the project experience. While initially coached by the Swiss experts this group of Bulgarian experts is expected to become capable of managing the elaboration of curricula and for carrying out trainings of teachers and instructors at schools.

2. Training of Master Teachers and Master Instructors.

The trainings will be initially carried out by Swiss experts with the (gradually increasing) involvement of the trained Bulgarian experts. The rolling trainings, to be carried out by the Bulgarian experts will be coached and backstopped by the Swiss experts only at the beginning of the training process.

The objectives and respectively the outcomes of the trainings will be:

- a. The trained teachers will be able to teach in a DVET-system according to the respective curriculum of the profession;
- b. The trained instructors will be able to work as leaders of the apprentices in their company and to endorse the necessary professional know-how;
- c. Teachers and instructors have knowledge and skills in the essentials of the Swiss pedagogical approach.

3. Training and education materials. Training materials have to be developed in order to be applied in the implementation of the project and later during the phase of disseminating the experience of the project.
4. Training visits in Switzerland.

Selected groups of Bulgarian trainees will visit Switzerland to acquire knowledge of the Swiss DVET-system.

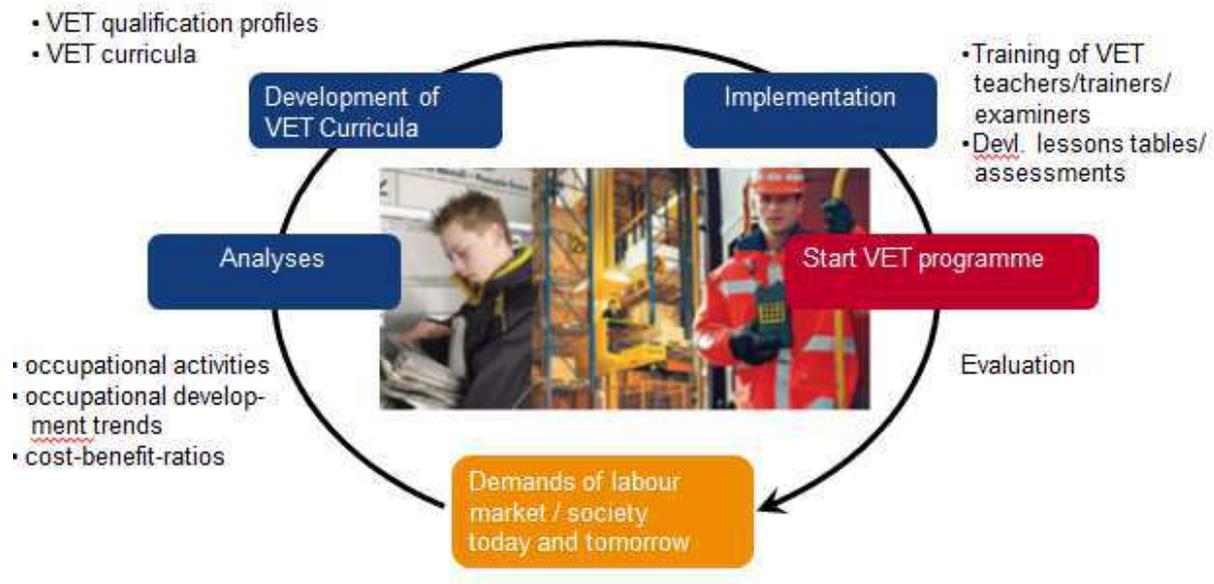
4.3. Developing of VET curricula and syllabi

The target VET curriculum comprises education and training components for the VET schools and a training component for the companies. It applies a bottom-up approach, deriving skills and knowledge directly from the practical working/job experience at the companies and at the same time is in line with the National State Educational Requirement (SER).

OUTCOME 3: A DVETS MODEL FOR DEVELOPING CURRICULA AND SYLLABI

The process of elaborating curricula and respective syllabi for the selected professions will comprise the following steps:

1. Collecting “situations” through workshops with workers from the selected companies carried out by Swiss experts, and then by the Bulgarian experts
 - a. For each of the selected professions 3 workshops will be carried out: Workshop 1: collecting the professional situations; Workshop 2: clustering the situations; Workshop 3: external/internal factors, future challenges
 - b. Elaborating the qualification profile for the selected professions
2. Drafting curricula for the selected professions by the Swiss and Bulgarian experts in close cooperation with the companies and the VET schools (educational objectives)
3. Drafting syllabi for the selected professions by the Swiss and Bulgarian experts in close cooperation with the companies and the VET schools
4. Endorsement of the curricula, the syllabi and the SER by the MES
5. Elaborating/improving and reproducing manuals (both in electronic and hard copy form), textbooks and educational materials.



The general implementation approach is that students are passing a complete education cycle. During its first phase (9th grade) they are focused on general education, while its second phase (10th – 12th grades) is increasingly focused on apprenticeship work inside the companies.

The curricula and the syllabi will be developed for the entire 4 year education cycle, including:

- the general education subjects⁴
- the theoretical vocational subjects
- the practical trainings and apprenticeships (separately for the schools and the companies)

At the beginning the process of the curricula development will be managed by the Swiss experts with the (increasing) involvement of the Bulgarian experts (trained under the training component). Later on the curricula/syllabi will be drafted by Bulgarian experts, being coached by the Swiss experts.

The theoretical components of the curriculum, related to the vocational subjects will be based on the new curriculum ensuring all competencies necessary for the profession, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The components of the curricula/syllabi, related to the general education subjects will be based on the current curricula and syllabus with amended distribution of hours, so that the last two years are assigned to practical training mostly. The theoretical vocational education subjects and the general education subjects will be developed in close cooperation with the MES experts and the schools involved. SFIVET will have the lead when it comes to defining the objectives and competencies.

All curricula and syllabi will undergo the formal endorsement process, being supported by the Swiss experts. On the basis of existing textbooks and educational materials in Bulgaria and

⁴SFIVET will only be counselling in the field of educational subjects.

Switzerland, a number of copies of textbooks and other educational materials will be improved, reproduced and available online, related to the selected professions.

4.4. Quantitative scope of the implementing process

The quantitative indicators for the entire project will be as follows. The process will be implemented for at least 10 professions. There will be respectively developed 10 curricula for VET schools, 10 syllabi for VET schools and 10 training curricula for in-company apprenticeships.

Each year starting from 2015 the process will be launched for 2 new professions, up to 3 schools, one class of up to 20 students per school, up to 10 companies per school (max. 5 students per instructor in a company). These targets however are prone to availability of capable and committed partnerships and willing to participate in the project. This is considered as a risk factor complemented with mitigation measures in the respective chapter below. In every following year two more professions will be developed and implemented with decreasing support from SFIVET and gradual involvement of Bulgarian experts (See the table below).

Year	Professions	Schools	classes/profession	students
2015	2	3	2	240
2016	2	3	2	240
2017	2	3	2	240
2018	2	3	2	240
2019	2	3	2	240
Total	10	15		1200

In quantitative terms the training activities will result in

- Not less than 30 trained trainers from the 3 above mentioned groups (see Outcome 2 above). This will provide in average 3 trainers per profession, one of whom will be independent from the governmental administration.
- Trained teachers in 15 schools: 100 to 120
- Trained instructors in at least 15 companies: 240 to 300.

If already fully developed and implemented professions are to be introduced to additional schools to enlarge the scope, this will not be covered by this project. The Bulgarian authorities eventual disseminate project outcome to the envisaged degree. To enable this process, particularly to tap on future EU funding under OP “Science and Education for Smart Growth”.

In the first year of the project implementation, along with the 9th grade classes, the Steering Committee may decide upon a proposal by the PMU and MES to have one class in one profession higher than 9th grade to start introducing elements of the dual-track system. The syllabi and curriculum for this class should be elaborated by MES and agreed upon with SFIVET.

OUTCOME 4: MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTING A DVETS PROCESS

The particular implementations steps are as follows:

1. Promotion of the project for a particular profession and school (1 or more class per school, max. 20 apprentices per class) in the selected settlements through the local media and open meetings with schools' board of trustees, parents, business and students. The promotion activities in the communities will be carried out in partnerships with the respective schools/companies.
2. Admission of students in the selected VET schools to pass a complete 4 years education and training cycle.
3. The main phases of the education cycle will be as follows:
 - a. During the first year (9 grade) students are studying only general education subjects and theoretical professional subjects as well as getting acquainted with the company by observing the production process.
 - b. During the last three years (10 and 12 grades) the students are working with an increasing intensity in a company under the supervision of company instructors and studying with a decreasing intensity in a VET school (see figure 2).
4. At the end of their education course students are passing state exams in line with the requirements of the Public Education Act and the VET Act.

		grade				
		9th	10th	11th	12th	
Days per Week →	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	
		1.0	3.0	3.0		
	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
		4.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	
	General Education	4.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	45.0%
	In-Company-Training	0.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	35.0%
	Professional Theory	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	20.0%

Figure 2: Distribution of time for a 4-years educational cycle

The timeline for the 10th grade is based on the assumption that the related legislation allows or will be respectfully amended.

The basic commitments of the partners in the implementation process will be as follows:

- During their 10 to 12 grades students are working in the companies on the basis of labour contracts for the period of the VET training. The sample of the contract will be developed and provided by the Governmental institutions, partnering with the project, and particularly, the MES and MLSP. The contracts envisage payments to the students, consistent with the minimum payment salaries in the respective sector⁵ and according to the working time spent. The salary should increase during the working period (10th, 11th and 12th grades) according to growing competencies.
- The partner companies will be committed to cooperate in the projects:
 - Providing salary payments to the students (introduced at a later stage since initially the salaries will be paid by the MES);
 - Assigning one instructor (mentor). A particular ToR will be developed for the instructors by the team of experts;
 - Ensuring the involvement of experienced workers in the curriculum development;
 - Ensuring the involvement of instructors in the training process;
 - Enabling the assigned instructors to follow the necessary trainings on DVET-contents;
 - Providing sufficient opportunities for in-company-training and autonomous work for the apprentices to reach the objectives of the curriculum;
 - Enabling a good health and safety environment for carrying out the apprenticeships. Particular criteria for the working environment will be provided in the contracts of the students;
 - Ensuring good communication and partnership with the respective school;
 - Responsibility in the conduct of the practical exam (providing expertise, workplace and organization).
- The vocational schools will be committed to the project by:
 - Ensuring the involvement of experienced vocational education teachers in the curriculum development;
 - Ensuring the involvement of experienced vocational education teachers in the training process;
 - Enabling the vocational education teachers to follow the necessary training on DVET-contents;

⁵ Normally the apprentices' salary is lower than for normal workers with certificate

- Ensuring good communication and partnership with the partner companies;
 - Ensuring participation of its Board of Trustees ⁶and parents;
 - Collaborating in the conduct of the theoretical professional assessment;
 - Transferring the payments to the apprentices, ensured initially by the project.
- The branch associations will be involved in the project while providing information about experts, training and education materials as well as carrying out other coordination work. Mainly they are expected to ensure communication between the involved companies.
 - The MES will be committed to the implementation in terms of:
 - Providing legislative support and consultations throughout the preparation and the implementation process of the project;
 - Monitoring the education and training process;
 - Supporting the admission process and the state exams (theoretical and practical);
 - Promoting VET-education in general and specifically the project and its implementation.

The partnership led by vocational schools, will be eligible to receive small financial support as part of the grant for improving their physical capacity to implement the DVETS. It will be justified in standardized application forms, submitted to the PMU and endorsed by the SDC. (see also the section financial arrangements).

MES, MLSP and ME will be in charge of crosschecking on possible financing by other national, EUU or multilateral sources. The NCU may facilitate the process.

4.5. Involvement, advocacy and legislative changes

The advocacy and the promotion activities will be anchored at the National Consultative Group on VET (NCG), comprising at least one representative at operational and expert level from the following institutions:

- MES
- NAVET
- ME
- MLSP

⁶ Schools Board of Trustees is a structure institutionalized by the Education Act that is provisioned to secure broader participation of parents and other stakeholders (business in the case of professional schools). They are registered as NGOs and in principle assist school's Director in its outreach and fundraising activities.

- Presidency
- Branch associations and Employers organisations
- Director/teacher of VET schools, involved in the project
- Manager/instructor of companies, involved in the project
- Labour organisations
- Other foreign development agencies, supporting introduction of DVETS in Bulgaria.

The advocacy work of the AWG will be supported by the PMU as its secretariat and Swiss consultants (SFIVET), who will participate in its activities on ad hoc basis or via distant consultations.

OUTCOME 5: ENABLED LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT AND A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE FOR THE DVETS

The programme “minimum” of the advocacy at the NCG will comprise the following activities:

- Providing recommendations to the Steering Committee for the improvement of the project implementation based on PMU and backstopping reports;
- Coordinating and advocating the required governmental support for the project horizontally throughout all concerned or affected state authorities and external institutions;
- Initiating amendments in existing legislative acts or elaborating new legislation related to the introduction of the DVETS in Bulgaria while stepping on the experience derived from the project;
- Disseminating the positive outcomes of the project and cooperating for overcoming its weaknesses (conferences, media events etc.);
- Advocating for the mobilisation of resources from external funding such as Governmental, corporate and EU funding sources.
- Networking the project experience with other donors’ intervention in Bulgaria regarding the DVETS.
- Promoting the implementation of the DVETS via the internal communication tools of the member institutions in the NCG.

The programme “maximum” of the NCG will be to evolve into a National Working Group (or Board) or a coordination body of all stakeholders, interested in the implementation of DVETS in Bulgaria. Depending on the commitment of the Bulgarian Government this more ambitious scenario would result in the recognition of the NCG as the national consultative or task force on the implementation of the DVETS.

In parallel to the NCG there will be carried out a Forum for the elaboration of recommendations for amendments and supplements to the “National Strategy for the Development of the VET System 2015-2020” adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2014.

The forum will be carried in a participatory way, providing a discussion platform for reaching a consensus about the key elements of reforming the VET system in Bulgaria. The Forum will act as an extended public consultations mechanism of the NCG, bringing together:

1. Representatives of the state at policy and strategy level (MES, MLSP, ME, NCU, Parliamentary commissions).
2. Representatives of the state at operational level (the Operational Programme “Science and Education for Smart Growth”, the NAVET, the Employment Agency, the SME Agency).
3. Representatives of professional schools both involved and not involved in the project.
4. Teachers’ Trade Union(s).
5. Representatives of the business, employers’ organisations and branch associations.
6. Representatives of pupils and parents, including NGOs and school boards.
7. Foreign development agencies, including the Swiss-Bulgarian, the German-Bulgarian and the Austrian-Bulgarian chambers of commerce, supporting the introduction of DVETS in Bulgaria.
8. The media and others interested stakeholders.

Following the Forum methodology, formerly developed by SDC in Bulgaria, the stakeholders will be structured in Working Tables (WTs) along the key stakeholders groups, listed above. Each WT will comprise about 10 representatives. The forum will be carried in 6 forum sessions, which will be dedicated to the components of the VET reform strategy, for example such as:

1. Situation analysis
2. Priorities and objectives
3. Action plan/main activities (2 forum sessions)
4. Institutionalisation and budget frame
5. Result indicators and monitoring.

The forum discussions (sessions) will be facilitated by an experienced Moderator, supported by a secretariat, which will organise technically the events, will recruit moderators, invites participants and facilitate together with PMU publicity related to the forum. The Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**BSCC) will play the role of such a secretariat and will be subcontracted for these services by the SCO/MES based on mutually agreed ToRs. A presentation of BSCC and its capacities in application of “Swiss Forum” approach are presented in Annex 2. Each forum session will deliver particular outputs, which will be further elaborated in the form of respective texts/sections of the Strategy by consultants. The project backstoppers will support the forum process and the elaboration of the Strategy.

The final output of the forum will be a Recommendation for Reform in the VET system in Bulgaria, which will be delivered to the MES and consequently to the Parliament for endorsement through amendments in the existing strategic and legislative documents regulating the VET system or respectively through introducing new acts. The work of the forum will be closely associated with the work of the NCG. While the NCG will act at technical and expert level the forum will bring to it grass-root ideas and policy recommendations. The time frame for the forum implementation will be 2015- 2016. The PMU will coordinate operationally the NCG, the forum process and the overall advocacy and promotion activities.

In summer 2014 MES initiated, together with one of the popular in the country daily newspaper, a weekly publication of information and materials presenting dual track education and its benefits. Such future initiatives might bring up project visibility and awareness among general public.

Additionally the PMU will carry out promotion activities, which will aim at improving the image of the dual education and the vocational education in Bulgaria, in general. The activities will comprise:

- Promotion activities at national level via electronic and Internet media;
- Organizing networking events with key national stakeholders such as the employers' organizations, the Trade Unions and others;
- Promoting the project at local level, including during the recruitment of students in the pilot classes in the project and during the exams.

5. Project Organization

The Project is to be implemented by the Swiss Contribution Office in cooperation with Ministry of Education and Science. The management set-up will be similar to Roma Inclusion Fund of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program and follow respective steering mechanisms as constituted by SBCP Framework Agreement. The organizational arrangements will comprise 4 levels of management and interventions under the overall guidance a Steering Committee. While detail repartition of responsibilities among provisioned project structures will be elaborated and agreed upon with Bulgarian constituency as part of the Thematic Fund Agreement (TFA) the following are some main aspects to be considered:

1. A Steering Committee will be in charge of the general steering, supervision and the anchoring of the project activities into the governmental institutions and policies;
2. A Programme Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for the operational management of the programme and the communication activities, hosted by MES;
3. An implementing group of consultants, comprising Swiss (SFIVET) and Bulgarian experts will be responsible for moderating and managing the process of curriculum development, carrying out trainings and preparing educational and training materials;
4. For each nominated cluster of partners (schools and companies) there will be established an Operative Partnership Group (OPG). It will address the need for a better cooperation between schools and companies and will bring together

representatives of the vocational school, the companies, school board of trustees and a representative of the students' parents. The OPG will act as a governance and consultation committee and will coordinate the feedback from the implementation of the project at local level. The OPG will provide recommendations for improving the process to the implementing partners and could be involved in the review of the textbooks.

Detailed Terms of References and for each of the above-mentioned bodies will be elaborated and approved by the SCO and the MES during the inception phase.

5.1. Steering committee

The Steering Committee shall provide guidance on strategic matters with a view to meeting the objectives of the project and with regard to ethics, compliance with applicable law and regulatory policies, environmental safety, labour and health policies, financial practices, disclosure and reporting. It is responsible for overseeing management and ensuring that systems are in place to manage the risks involved. The Steering Committee shall be established by SDC, in collaboration with the NCU, the line ministries and the PMU. It may include representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Economy, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the NCU and SDC. It shall meet at least 2 times per year. Representatives of the Administration of the President of Bulgaria, organisations of employers and employees could participate at the SC sessions as observers.

The presidency of the Steering Committee shall be assured by SDC. The Secretariat of the Steering Committee shall be secured by the PMU.

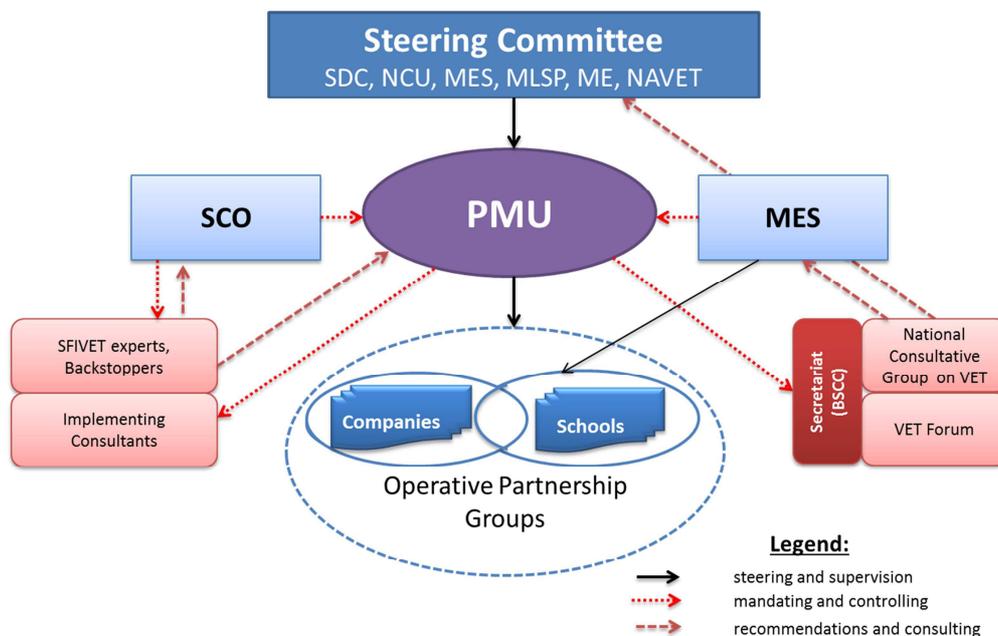


Figure 3: Organogram

5.2. Project Management Unit (PMU)

A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be set up for the coordination and implementation of the operations as well as for the management of the advocacy and the communication activities. As a matter of principle the PMU will assume the responsibilities of “Swiss Intermediate Body” as stipulated in SBCP Framework Agreement and will be hosted at MES. The PMU will be contracted by SCO and report to the SCO and the MES. On all aspects pertinent to DEVETS, PMU will be supported by the Backstopping Team (See Control and Backstopping).

“PMU” approach in the operational management is justified by the innovative nature of the interventions and the limited management and expert capacity of SCO and the Bulgarian Government to implement the DVETS. The applied PMU approach brings together the advantages of having the interventions “inside” the system, allowing sustainable advocacy and policy interventions, and at the same time - manage the project “externally” allowing higher flexibility in the coordination of wide variety of experts, including from Bulgaria and Switzerland, and sustaining the project management under dynamic political context in Bulgaria. Generally, the PMU will have a role of coordination and management of the programme, but it would not replace the competent units of MES in the implementation of their tasks, including the approval of syllabi and curriculum, and the reformation of the VET system in general.

The following are some PMU specific project related tasks:

- Drafting the planning documents and ToRs for Bulgarian consultants and external implementing organisations to be contracted either by SCO or MES;
- Supporting technically the implementation of the project through organising trainings, workshops and other implementation activities;
- Organising project applications of vocational schools, carrying out payments, monitoring and controlling on the implementation of their activities;
- Acting as a secretariat to the Steering Committee and carrying out other networking activities;
- Elaborating communication strategy for the project and carrying out publicity and visibility activities related to all project interventions. These will be implemented mainly through recruiting external communication consultants and PR agencies;
- The PMU will be responsible for carrying out the project accountancy, including collecting and organising primary accountancy documents for all project expenses, both born by SCO or trough project account established by MES. This will also include coordinating the co-financing inputs from the Bulgarian payments, consolidated progress and financial reporting.

The PMU staff will comprise of a national Team Leader, 2 National Experts and an accountant (to be provided by the MES). The Team Leader and the Experts will be recruited by SCO. The key competencies of the PMU Leader would be in general/project management, while the profiles of the two other experts would be in education/VET education for the first expert, and business services administration/company management for

the second expert. Experience in projects, comprising trainings and training of trainers would be an asset.

The PMU staff will be contracted by the SCO (Swiss Embassy in Bulgaria) through an employment contract according to Bulgarian law and applicable internal regulations. The MES as PMU host will among others assume the following tasks:

- Hosts the PMU and provide back office support (1- 2 rooms, Internet and phone connection, access to administrative and accounting staff, usage of meeting rooms); this includes the opening of a bank account for the project to which the bulk of Swiss share and national co-financing will be credited to and operated;
- Advises on and guaranties the compliance of the programme with national strategies and other relevant initiatives;
- Facilitates through the Steering Committee and the NCG the horizontal integration of the programme with line ministries and other national and regional relevant institutions.

Taking into account the withdraw of SDC from Bulgaria by the end of 2016, the role and tasks of PMU will, towards the end of 2017, be by gradually reduced and key competences transferred to the respective authorities within MES and other institutions involved.

5.3. Swiss and Bulgarian consultants

SFIVET will be contracted by the SDC in Bern with the objective to act as key resource institution in the project, providing:

- Key trainers of trainers;
- Key experts in curriculum/syllabus development;
- Support and advice in editing training materials and textbooks
- Contract and provide experts for other project activities where appropriate.

The SFIVET will be paid by the SDC and will report to the SDC. SFIVET will provide up to 5 experts to the project. Two of the Swiss experts will act as leaders of the Backstopping Team.

Up to 10 Bulgarian experts will be recruited with the main task to:

- Be trained by the Swiss experts;
- Train teachers and company instructors at the companies;
- Act as moderators of the curriculum/syllabus development process;
- Provide inputs to the edition and the elaboration of training materials and textbooks;
- Moderate the interaction between the schools and the companies through managing the Operative Partnership Project Groups;
- Consulting MES in elaborating and updating DVETS

The Bulgarian experts will be paid by the project and will report to the PMU and the SCO/MES. One of the Bulgarian experts will act as member of the Backstopping team.

5.4. Operative Partnership Group

The Operative Partnership Group (OPG) will bring together representatives of the VET school, (including School Boards of Trustees), the companies and a representative of the students' parents. It will be responsible for coordinating the activities at local project level including for:

- Mobilising participants for workshops;
- Preparing applications for financial aid;
- Monitoring the implementation of the supported micro-projects of the VET schools on local level;
- Coordinating inputs and activities between the partners at local level , e.g. schools, companies, local authorities, students and their parents and others;
- Promoting the project at local level;
- Proving inputs and reviewing textbooks and training materials;
- Carrying out others logistical and operational work locally.

The OPG will be headed by an internally elected chair. The OPG will be provided with a small budget for honorarium, operational and ad-hoc costs. The OPG will report to the PMU according ToR.

5.5 Project beneficiaries

Two main groups will directly benefit from the project. At first this is the group of approximately 30 "Master Trainers" which shall constitute the core capacities in DEVETS in Bulgaria (Dual Track Education Experts, Master Teachers and Master Instructors). The second group will comprises of at least 15 vocational schools and their partnering business structures (companies, branch associations or chambers). It is expected that more than 400 teachers and instructors as well as over 1200 pupils entering the specialised classes will also benefit from the project. More concrete information on project beneficiaries is provided in the logical framework.

6. Controlling, reporting and backstopping

The overall steering of the project will be carried out by the Steering Committee, which will be established at the launch of the project. Its constituent meeting will be shortly after TFA signature and consequent one shall be convened at least twice a year. SC compositions and interface with other project structures are presented in point 4 above.

Project monitoring will be organised at three levels. PMU will monitor implementation of activities to be performed by vocational schools and Bulgarian pool of consultants/trainers/experts. The SCO, when and where possible with participation of experts from MES, will monitor the results of the project implementation, according to the objectives

and expected results, outputs and impacts defined in this Project Description and its log frame in particular. To this end SCO will rely for its monitoring activities on internal project backstopping and monitoring team, comprising the two Swiss (SFIVET) and one Bulgarian backstopper, who will be also acting as key members of the implementing team of experts. Due to the gradual reduction of project activities and SCO staff towards the end of the project (2017-18) part of SCO monitoring and controlling activities might be transferred to these backstoppers or other suitable structures. On-field monitoring of the micro-projects, supported with financial aid will be carried out by the PMU with the support of the community based Operative Partnership Group.

An external mid-term evaluation will be carried out by the end of the 2nd year of the project (2016) with objectives among others, to provide suggestions about amendments of the sustainability and scaling-up strategy of the project and opportunities to capitalise experience and know-how gained.

The PMU will be responsible for the operational reporting of the project as well as for the financial oversight according templates which will be developed by the PMU and endorsed by the SCO and MES. The PMU will submit at minimum annual basis narrative and financial reports to the SCO and the Steering Committee. The PMU might be requested to provide also quarterly (particularly during the inception phase) or bi-annual narrative and financial reports on the project.

7. Budget, contractual and financial arrangements

Contractually, following the stipulations of SBCP Framework Agreement, the project will be constituted under a Thematic Fund Agreement to be signed by SDC and the three Bulgarian ministries involved: MES, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The MES is committed to ensure the entire co-financing on the side of the Bulgarian Government if it is too complicated to arrange individual co-financing from the other two Ministries.

“Master Trainers”, for their involvement in rolling trainings, will be contracted based on consultants’ type of contracts initially prepared and signed by PMU/SCO. At a later stage, after the inception phase and signature of TFA, their contracts will be concluded with MES as part of capacity transfer.

Projects support to vocational schools, in their capacity of Executing Agencies (EA), as provisioned in FA, and their business partners will be based on Activity Agreement to be co-signed by SDC/SCO and MES. These agreements will stipulate main responsibilities and refer to commitments and activities as depicted in project applications. One aspect that still needs to be clarified during the inception phase, based on brief legal and SWOT analysis, is which entity, the institution “vocational schools” or their Board of Trustees (registered as an NGO) will be better suited to accommodate the role of EA.

The payments to the PMU staff, to the Swiss experts and to the Backstopper(s) will be provided directly by the SDC/SCO.

The payments for the core project activities, including the financial support to vocational schools will be provided by MES after the approval of the PMU through a specific Bank Account open by the Hosting Institution (MES) solely for the programme. At this bank account Swiss and the Bulgarian financial contributions for the project will be transferred -

respectively 15% for national co-financing from Bulgarian budgetary sources (MES budget) and 85% contribution be SBCP.

The PMU will on a regular basis, not less than at six months intervals, inform MES on the payments that have been disbursed during the past period. Intermediate and final financial audits of the Project are also planned and foreseen in the budget. The SCO may request NCU and MES to conduct an audit by the respective state Audit authority in charge of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program.

There will be established a Project Fund, intended to provide financial aid for micro-projects, to be carried out by professional schools and business partnering in the project. The vocational schools will be eligible to receive financial support exclusively for the purpose of improving their capacities to implement the DVETS.

The financial aid will be delivered on the basis of invitations for projects and payment rules, developed and coordinated by the PMU and endorsed by the SCO and the MES. The main financing conditions shall, among others, include:

- The funding will cover 100% of the micro-project costs, if they are directly related to the practical implementation of the DVETS.
- Eligible activities for micro-projects would be:
 - Refurbishments and equipment for the schools
 - Financial incentives for school teachers and instructors (at the companies) that shall decrease over time, as the MES may introduce new financial model for remunerating teachers.
- Compliance with maximum total cost of a micro-project, which would be considered for financing.

The following table represent overall budget for the project in Swiss Francs including co-financing share. A detailed, operational budget for the inception phase and first project year will be developed by PMU and endorsed by SCO and MES as part of the process of negotiating and signing TFA for the project.

Overall Budget		Swiss Contribution	Bulgarian Contribution
CHF	Total Budget	85%	15%
Know-how transfer and capacity building (introducing principles of Swiss Dual Education system in Bulgaria)	1'980'000	1'683'000	297'000
Swiss know-how transfer & backstopping (SFIVET) during first year (2014 - 2015)	570'000	484'500	85'500
Swiss expertise, backstopping and classes follow up (SFIVET) 2016-2018	400'000	340'000	60'000
National backstopping and expertise	80'000	68'000	12'000
Policy framework and legislative changes (NCG and national Forum model)	150'000	127'500	22'500

Overall Budget		Swiss Contribution	Bulgarian Contribution
Training program and exchange visit(s)	500'000	425'000	75'000
Stakeholders involvement, coordination, links to international/EU initiatives	80'000	68'000	12'000
Awareness, communication and visibility	200'000	170'000	30'000
Projects fund - support for professional schools (facilities, teaching materials, equipment, capacity building, financial incentives etc.)	900'000	765'000	135'000
Project management and steering	465'000	395'250	69'750
Salary Programme Manager (3y, 100%)	120'000	102'000	18'000
Salary Business Development Expert (3y, 100%)	105'000	89'250	15'750
Salary Educational Expert (3y, 100%)	105'000	89'250	15'750
Accountancy, secretarial support	40'000	34'000	6'000
Logistic, arrangement, trips, per diem	50'000	42'500	7'500
Translations, equipment, supplies	45'000	38'250	6'750
Audits, monitoring and evaluation	115'000	97'750	17'250
Baseline/Public opinion survey (pre- and post-)	50'000	42'500	7'500
End of project evaluation and stock taking	40'000	34'000	6'000
Audit	25'000	21'250	3'750
Reserve	70'000	59'500	10'500
Total	3'530'000	3'000'500	529'500

Audits will be performed at annual basis. The first audit will cover a period from October 2014 to December 2015. Evaluation exercise and second round of sociological survey will be conducted towards the end of 2017 which will be considered as a last full project year.

8. Timeframe table

A full educational cycle in a vocational school in Bulgaria needs 4 school years (15 Sept – 30 June). The first school year to be in which the project will start introducing DEVET will be 2015/16. Project activities, financed by SDC will start with an inception phase in October 2014. The bulk of activities will be carried in the period 2015 – 2017, while a limited in scale oversight of VET classes and curricula/syllabi will be performed until June 2019. Therefore

project duration will be 39 months. The following is provisional time schedule which indicates also involvement of Swiss (SFIVET) expertise.

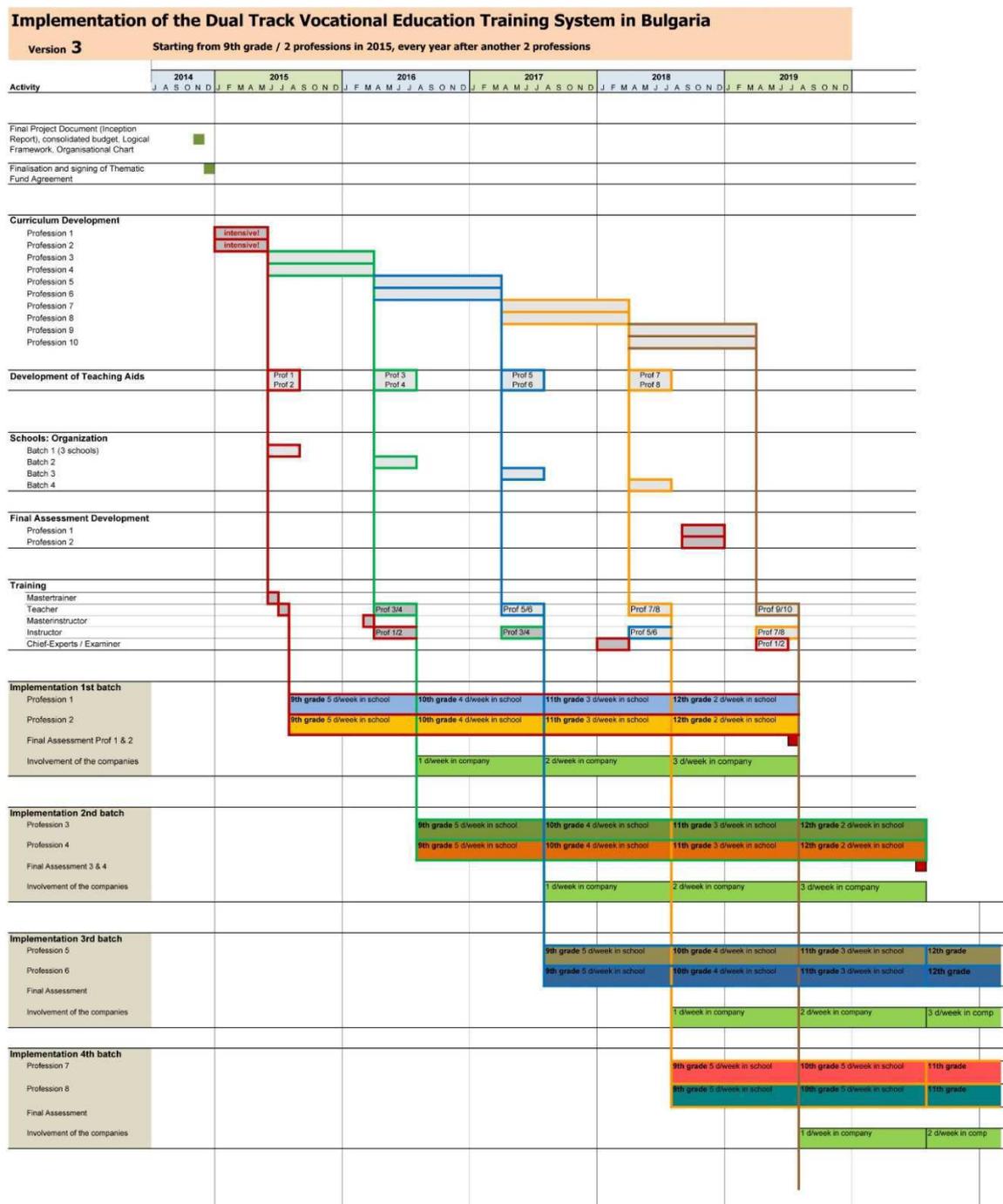


Figure 4: Schedule of implementation

9. Sustainability

The sustainability of the project stems out from its very objective to support the implementation of a dual-track educational policy, initiated by the Government of Bulgaria itself. Therefore at objective level the sustainability of the project will depend on the commitment of the current and the future Bulgarian governments to sustain and scale-up the introduction of the DVET system in the country.

In terms of implementation strategy the project is anchored at sustainable governmental and business structures. There are not envisaged main interventions, addressing any parallel structures or project-based bodies that would cease operating once the project is over.

The institutional sustainability is addressed in several project components:

- At management level the Steering Committee and the Advocacy Working Group will act as inter-ministerial bodies, intended to bring together committed governmental structures and business partners as main drive of initiated reforms;
- At operational level the PMU is anchored at a key Governmental institution (MES), ensuring horizontal interactions with all interested governmental institutions, and creating an enabling advocacy environment. It is envisaged that after 2016 the PMU functions are to be gradually transferred to the respective Directorate at the MES.
- At local level there is envisaged a partnership structure set up between vocational schools, employers and business structures, addressing the identified need for a working interface between schools and companies. The role and functions of OPGs can gradually be transferred to schools boards of trustees, which are by law meant to secure counselling schools directors and enable involvement of parents but also business.

At intervention level sustainability is addressed through the following:

- The training activities envisage a gradual transfer of knowledge and skills to Bulgarian experts, coming both from Governmental, business and non-governmental sectors. This is expected to ensure critical mass and capacity for carrying through the Governmental reform in the DVET system once the project is over.
- There is envisaged an advocacy component, anchored at the Advocacy Working Group, which is intended to promote and prepare interventions in improving policy and legal environment, and necessary for scaling up the DVET system once the project is over.
- The core interventions are piloting a genuine activity, e.g., a real and full-fledge educational cycle that can be replicated in a straightforward way once the project is over. Similarly, other outputs, such as developed curriculum, syllabi, textbooks and others can be utilized in the scaling up of the reform once the project is over.

The financial sustainability, similarly to the institutional sustainability will depend on the commitment of the Bulgarian governments to sustain and scale-up the introduction of the DVET system. The Steering Committee, the Advocacy Working Group and the VET Directorate (Acting as a PMU) at the MES will be expected to mainstream the project outcomes with upcoming financial means of the EU supported operational programmes.

10. Assessment of risks and potentials

The project implies high potentials but also risks must be taken into account. The following risks and potentials need to be considered:

Risks:

- At the level of project goals the main risk is that the current political commitment may be reduced or even disappear throughout political dynamic in Bulgaria. This risk however is moderate, taking into account the high interest to the project from the institutions like the Presidency but also from the vivid business community;
- At the level of objectives the main difficulties and risks are linked to the fragmented scope of the project interventions. The current political commitment is to introduce *elements* of the Dual Track System, while the other segments of the (education) system are still to undergo profound reforms. The *dual track* elements are considered to be adapted to the existing educational system, which opens wide doors for university education. As mentioned earlier the current education system reflects the current value system in the Bulgarian society, for which working in a *non-university profession* looks like a life failure;
- At the level of implementation the main risks are related to the lack of confidence and cooperation between the companies and the vocational schools. The companies are concerned about the high costs of implementing the reform while the schools are concerned that the project would make them even less attractive. The introduction of dual track practical training would lead to restructuring of the curriculum, which would be at the expense of reducing the general education content or the theoretical vocational education. Even now the quality of the general education in most of the vocational schools is perceived lower, compared to the common or the general secondary education schools while “*the best teachers*” reportedly go to secondary language schools;
- At the level of implementation another risks is associated with possible opposition (often hidden) by trade unions but also from some business circles related to the needed changes in the Labour Code. Hence the project might become a hostage of other agenda.
- At a social-economic level the risk that well educated and capable workers leave the country to make better money abroad is undeniable and its consequences cannot be foreseen.
- In timing terms the project will need to last at least full 4 school years plus an additional inception year. So starting eventually in October 2014 the last project activities will extend to mid 2019 in a 4-year educational cycle. The project does not consider interventions in schools of 5-years educational cycle as the MES considers reducing all VET curricula from 5 to 4 years.

Potentials:

- At the level of goals the main potential is that the Dual Track System triggers a wider reform in the entire vocational education system in the country which is also supported by EU structural and cohesion instruments;
- At the level of objectives the main potential is that the project is replicated and leads to a successful implementation of the desired elements of the Dual Track VET system in the country. There is a political and social commitment for introducing reforms that would bring the vocational education closer to the business. The companies, the

government and vocational schools are highly convinced in the importance of implementing the dual track VET system. Not *whether*, but *how* is the question that is discussed and currently perceived differently by different stakeholders. The MES is committed to scale up and ensure the funding if the project is successful;

- At the level of implementation the main potential is to mobilise external resources for the project, such as from the EU Operational Programmes for the period 2014 – 2020. This would be also an opportunity to mainstream the impact of the project horizontally in other social fields, such as unemployment, addressing marginalised groups, and others.

11. Logical framework

	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Overall vision and goal	Vision: Vocational education is tightly linked to the demand of the business. Main goal: Create a model and a capacity for implementing the DVETS in Bulgaria.	The government launches a full-fled reform of the VET system, mainstreaming the secondary vocational education to the actual business needs. Appearing statistical data on decreasing deficit of skilled labour force and increasing image of the VET education and related professions.	Government policies Statistical data	Sustained governmental support Sustained economic stability
Specific outcomes at the level of objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot a new approach in the development of curriculum and syllabus in the VET system. 2. Implementation of the curriculum in a complete educational cycle in a number of professions. 3. Building capacity for disseminating the DVETS in Bulgaria. 4. Supporting legislative changes for the implementation of the DVETS in Bulgaria. 5. Promote a positive public image of the project and the VET in general. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed via a DVETS approach 10 curricula and 10 syllabi 2. Implemented curricula in 10 professions 3. Trained 30 Bulgarian experts to disseminated the knowledge of the DVETS 4. Initiated amendments in legislative acts or elaborated new legislation or related recommendations to the introduction of the DVETS in Bulgaria; 5. The DVETS has a positive image in society; advocated mobilisation of resources from corporate and EU funding sources. 	<p>The monitoring and reporting system</p> <p>External reports, media reports</p> <p>Sociological survey on public attitudes</p>	<p>The Government integrates the DVETS in the entire educational system.</p> <p>The migration flow of skilled workers is mitigated.</p>
Expected outputs at the level of activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carried out activities related to the development of DVETS curricula 2. Carried out implementation activities in schools 3. Carried out training activities 4. Carried out advocacy activities 5. Carried out promotion activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed 10 curricula applying the DVETS approach 2. Carried implementation processes, comprising 10 professions, 15 schools; 1200 apprentices in total 3. 30 trained trainers of trainers; 100-120 trained teachers in 15 schools; 240-300 trained instructors in 15 schools 4. Established and operating NCG and carried out Forum for the elaboration of a Recommendation for Modernisation and Reform of the VET System in Bulgaria 5. Disseminated positive outcomes; carried out networking and cooperating activities 	<p>The monitoring and reporting system</p> <p>Backstopping and media reports</p>	<p>The trust between the business and the VET sector is improved.</p>

Annex 1: Provisional list of criteria

Provisional criteria for implementing partners (partnership between vocational schools, companies and business associations)

- Evidences of strong commitment for cooperation between the companies and the VET schools;
- Availability of training centre or training facility in the company or in the vocational school enabling training for the students, prior to their involvement in the production process;
- Evidences for sufficient interest from students to get enrolled in such a project and sufficient demand for employees in the specific profession on the side of the companies
- Commitment from the association ;
- The company's size should allow having one student trained by an instructor for about one hour a working day. The production process should offer a great range of the competencies that are described in the curriculum (about 70 percent);
- General size of the economic sector (number of employees);
- Economic health and potential of the branch;
- Level of qualification required in the profession;
- Geographical focus (clusters of companies concentrated in one region);
- Quality and capacity of the associations representing the branch;
- Existence (and readiness) of big companies providing a critical mass (minimum number of apprentices is still to be defined);
- Quality of the vocational schools related to the branch;

Provisional criteria for professions

- High added value, produced in the sector;
- High demand by business/companies and insufficient supply of skilled workforce;
- Critical mass of workforce and businesses, sufficient for disseminating the project experience;
- Level of complexity (cognitive level) of the work of the profession envisaged.

Annex 2: Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce key competences

Competences of BSCC as to act as secretariat of a Forum for the elaboration of a Proposal for Modernisation and reform in the VET System in Bulgaria The main goal of BSCC is to support the development of the economic relations between Bulgaria and Switzerland and to represent and protect the business interests of its members. The BSCC members include a number of Swiss companies with leading positions at the world market and operating in Bulgaria, as well as small and medium-sized companies from important sectors of the economy. The majority of them which have deployed their manufacturing activity in Bulgaria have expressed their readiness to support the introduction of the dual vocational education system.

During the 10 years of its existence, BCSS has established excellent working relations with various Bulgarian institutions and similar organisations such as:

- The Ministry of Economy and its two agencies under its umbrella – the SME Promotion Agency and the Invest Bulgaria Agency;
- Employers' and branch organisations such as: Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Bulgarian Branch Chamber - Machine Building, the Bulgarian Association of Electrical Engineering and Electronics -BASSEL, the Bulgarian association of Apparel and Textile Producers and Exporters, Branch Chamber of Woodworking and Furniture Industry, etc.'
- The joint chambers in Bulgaria such as: German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Austrian Business Circle in Bulgaria, and owing to its membership in the Joint Chambers Club to the BCCI – with all other similar organisations in Bulgaria.

The BSCC's operational activity is run by a Secretariat.