



# EU AND SERBIA AT WORK

## FACT SHEET

### EU ASSISTANCE TO VET IN SERBIA

Since September 2014, future **upholsters, carpenters, mechatronic technicians, electrotechnicians for telecommunications, tourism technicians, nurse technicians, pharmaceutical, lab and physiotherapeutic technicians and students in some other profiles in all secondary schools in Serbia are being educated according to new or modernised curricula.** These profiles were developed under the **Vocational Education and Training Reform (VET) Programme.** After years of testing, they were assessed as appropriate and this enabled to **start their introduction from pilot schools to the whole system of secondary vocational education and training.**

Although the systematization of pilots is the most obvious, this is only one of the results of the VET reform which in Serbia has been in progress for over a decade, with the support of the European Union.

Through the VET reform programme, since 2003 the EU has allocated grants totaling **€24 million**, and the latest, fifth phase of the programme – **EU Assistance to VET in Serbia**, of a total value of **€3,75 million** started in April 2014. Several key fields are in the focus of this project: further systematization of pilot profiles and implementation of the new Concept of Baccalaureate and final exams in secondary VET, further development of the National Qualifications Framework and support to the work of yet to be established (but for the aligning education with economy, vital) sector skills councils, and procurement of equipment for VET schools.

The fifth phase of the Programme, **EU Assistance to VET in Serbia** was aimed at providing smooth continuation of the ongoing reform. During the previous years support was provided for development of strategy and policy formation and now, after this job is by and large finished, the education system in Serbia has the important task of bringing those concepts to fruition.

On the other hand, this project, as with any other project implemented under IPA funding, is primarily focussed on country preparation for EU accession. EU initiatives, declarations, agreements and tools relating to education tend to be generally relevant and applicable to all, and are adopted by many countries outside EU, too. Serbia has decided to follow this path. Developing qualification standards, referencing qualifications and their mutual recognition are just one of examples – NQF that still is under development in Serbia will facilitate mobility of labour.

The Project beneficiary is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, as well as pilot schools and secondary school students all over the Republic of Serbia.

The main results of the VET programme which can be seen are lower non-attendance and higher average marks. Teachers notice that students show more interest in learning; during the practical training students acquire new skills quickly and easily which has been evident at the final examination, attended by representatives of employers as members of the examination commission. For example, a follow up survey in mechanical engineering and agricultural schools has shown that up to 70-80% of students have found employment within 3 months after graduation. In addition, it is evident that students are more interested in modernised profiles, e.g. pilot profiles tourism and catering and medical schools for years are among most popular profiles, which means that students with better marks enroll into those schools now.





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The support to Serbian vocational training schools has ranged from physical (re)construction of school buildings and their utilities to deliveries of computers and specialised training equipment (clinical and pharmaceutical laboratories, kitchens, bakeries, mechanics laboratories, electronic diagnostics for cars, etc).

There are yet objectives to be reached, such as Bacculaureate and final exam systematisation, planned for 2017/18, or the fully developed NQF. While changes that will be introduced by Bacculaureate exam are still to be determined completely by Concept to be adopted, benefit of the NQF is easier to see. The NQF allows all education provision within a country to be articulated in a way as to allow clear identification of levels of provision, entry/exit and progression pathways, as well as nationally recognised quality assurance mechanisms. They have been adopted throughout the EU, as well as by accession/candidate states and many others all over the world. The purpose of NQF is to provide a mechanism for clear description and identification of educational provision, allowing qualifications to be clearly understood between countries. This mutual recognition of qualifications is essential if the EU is to have unrestricted and unimpeded mobility of labour. And this is going to change life in Serbia once the accession is completed.

## CONTACT

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