

## Slow Progress with the Bulgarian Education System

by  
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It has been a long, painful year for Bulgarian citizens. After the long awaited elections in October the financial crisis came after the head of the Corporate Commercial Bank, Tzvetan Vassilev, was accused of corruption. Indeed, the content of a 1.8 billion € portfolio i.e. 65% of the loans granted by the bank, disappeared. The bank was finally closed on 11th July. The result of the bank crisis was that the President of the Republic, Rossen Plevneliev, asked the government to launch a procedure to join the EU's Single Surveillance Mechanism. (5)

In addition, general economic growth in the country is slow, unemployment is high and important reforms need to be carried out in key sectors such as the judiciary, healthcare and education. Difficult reforms in retirement system are long overdue; decisions over if and how to build the South Stream pipeline and how to stabilise the budget and the banking system after the collapse of Corporate Trade Bank, are pressing.(3, 4)

Bulgaria needs miracles in every aspect of its life. The new government is planning a detailed analysis of the financial situation to identify how improvements can be made. A review of the quality of education is also to be undertaken. Improving the educational system and raising the general educational level will be favourable for labour supply and for higher tax revenues in the future. In order to improve the *effectiveness of public expenditure*, the World Bank will provide assistance for institutional reforms in education, with the objective of optimising public spending. Assistance will be targeted both at improving the *quality of the primary and secondary education* through strengthening the schools' reporting system and improving the system of external evaluation of the education quality, and at improving the *quality and significance of higher education* through better management in higher schools, stricter control over their accreditation and linking the government financing to output. These plans are considered in the National Reform Programme 2011-2015, but for the last four they have had minimal impact. (2, 4)

The last two regular Bulgarian governments tried to pass a change in the legislation, stipulating that the state pays subsidy to private schools starting from 2016. It did not go through. The change would probably have restructured the Bulgarian educational system, in which the state budget subsidises only state educational institutions. Experts argue, if the private schools should get subsidies at all and if yes, what part of the study schools' subsidies per student should they be entitled to. The critics of the idea believe that the stimulus would not make private schools more affordable but would lead to their multiplication without any guarantee they would offer good quality education. The defenders point to the fact that the state discriminates against pupils in private schools, since it doesn't pay for them, as it does for the ones attending state institutions. (1)

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1. <http://www.vagabond.bg/advertorials/education/2839-holding-future-in-your-hands.html>
  2. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp\\_bulgaria\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_bulgaria_en.pdf)
  3. [http://www.ecfr.eu/blog/entry/messy\\_elections\\_in\\_bulgaria\\_an\\_attempt\\_for\\_a\\_read\\_out1#sthash.tVqts9b.dpuf](http://www.ecfr.eu/blog/entry/messy_elections_in_bulgaria_an_attempt_for_a_read_out1#sthash.tVqts9b.dpuf)
  4. <http://euobserver.com/political/125898>
  5. <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/oeo/oeo-1535-en.pdf>

The Bulgarian educational system is not yet on a firm footing because there is no strong will from the so called 'political elite'. Some people who work in the Ministry of Education try to enforce a normal law like in the other European countries, but there are always people who

want to scrounge from it and prevent real progress. Private schools like 'P.R.Slaveikov' and 'New Generation' in Sofia, which have a Christian world view of teaching in some subjects, are up against the unfair Bulgarian education system, which is failing so many pupils in our society.

December 2014