



## **Curriculum Analysis – Bulgaria**

The Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science issues two types of documents that concern the educational content taught at schools (incl. the pre-school stage). These are:

- The state education standards (SES)
- Educational programs

SES deal with the educational content in more general way, treating the content in terms of “Cultural and educational domains” and defining what learners should achieve in the frames of an educational stage.

The educational stages being:

- Pre-primary (obligatory, 1 year before the start of the school education)
- Primary: I – IV grade
- Middle (lower secondary): V – VII grade
- Secondary: VII – XII grade

The *educational programs* cover the educational content for each separate grade from the pre-school and school education.

Both these documents (state educational standards and the educational programs) answer to the definition of “curriculum”, so for the purposes of the MOV-UP curriculum analysis were considered either of them.

The “Cultural and educational domains” covered by SES are:

1. Bulgarian Language and Literature
2. Foreign languages
3. Mathematics, Informatics and Technologies
4. Social Sciences and Citizenship Education
5. Natural Sciences and Ecology
6. Arts
7. Household and Technologies
8. Physical Culture and Sports

The focus of this analysis falls mainly on the domains of *Bulgarian Language and Literature* and *Social Sciences and Citizenship Education*.

The Bulgarian Law for pre-school and school education (LPSE) determines that *schooling* means acquiring a set of competences - knowledge, skills and attitudes, necessary for successful passing of the student into the next grade, stage and/or level of education and related to the achievement of the objectives of the school education (LPSE, art. 75, p. 1). Similar are the objectives of pre-primary education, which "creates the conditions for acquiring a set of competencies - knowledge, skills and relationships necessary for the successful passing of the child to school education" (art. 69, p. 1).

The *general education* includes the following key groups of competencies\*, set by the law:

1. Competencies in Bulgarian language;
2. Ability to communicate in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in the fields of natural sciences and technologies;



4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and Citizenship competences;
7. Initiative and Entrepreneurship;
8. Cultural Competence and skills of creative expression;
9. Skills supporting sustainable development, healthy lifestyle and sports.

*\* Competencies from 1 through 8 overlap with those described in the European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (Recommendation 2006/962/EC on key competences for lifelong learning)*

The law also states that "Education as a process includes education, behavioral schooling and socialization" (LPSE, art.3). However, SES and the educational programs only define learning outcomes and almost never tackle specific aspects of behavior schooling and socialization. Also, although the cited legislation and the SES repeatedly refer to the acquisition of "knowledge, skills and attitudes", the focus of SES and the educational programs is on what the student knows and can do as a result of learning as well as basic concepts, But they do not treat the aspect by developing certain relationships (positive or negative) to the topics and concepts studied. Even when SES describes socio-cultural competences, they do not include an attitude aspect. For example: "As a result of literature education at the end of the initial stage of the primary education, the student should acquire the following (socio-cultural) competencies:

Understands the basic ethical opposition good-evil and explains it in specific storyline situations. Explains ethical relationships in the family and small community according to the stories of literary works studied.

Recognizes the main features of its national identity in literary studies.

Greets on traditional holidays and in connection with Bulgarian folk customs. Participates in group activities such as games and staging literary works."

(SES for Cultural and Educational Field: Bulgarian Language and Literature, Subject: Literature, knowledge, skills, relations at the end of the 4th grade)

Pre-primary curriculum	
<p>Introductory overview of the curriculum (e.g. what is the focus, what are the approaches, how is it delivered, etc.)</p>	<p>The pre-primary education in Bulgaria is obligatory for at least 1 year before the beginning of the primary school. Bulgarian children start primary education at the age of 7. Since earlier admittance is also allowed, some parents send their children to school from the age of 6. So, the pre-primary education is addressed to children aged 5+.</p> <p>The pre-primary education takes place in 2 different contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at kindergartens (for the children who already attend kindergarten)</li> <li>- at school (for children who did not attend kindergarten)</li> </ul> <p>Except the pre-school year, attendance of kindergarten is not obligatory in Bulgaria, but is highly preferred by the working parents. Unfortunately, the places in municipal kindergartens in big cities are not enough to allow admittance of all children from the respective age cohort.</p> <p>The teachers in kindergartens have higher education degree (minimum bachelor), as well as those who teach in primary</p>



school. The kindergarten teachers pass the same type of training as the primary-school teachers. However, at pre-school stage children are more often exposed also to interactions with personnel who does not have pedagogical background as there are no requirements towards the qualification of the care-givers, many of whom have just basic level of education.

The overall goal of pre-primary education in Bulgaria, according to the *state educational standards* is to "set the foundations for lifelong learning by ensuring the physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual-moral, social, emotional and creative development of pupils" and to create conditions for holistic development of children's personality.

The use of innovative and alternative education practices in all kindergartens and schools is encouraged in order to enrich children with "additional competences" which are not described in the national curriculum.

Pre-primary program provides education on the following topics: Bulgarian Language and Literature, Mathematics, Surrounding world (nature and social environment), Arts (drawing and painting), Music, Technology and Household Management, Physical Culture (sports).

The SES defines the pre-primary preparation as a process of upbringing, education and socialization of the children.

The educational activities in the pre-school stage are combined with play and free time. The pre-primary standard speaks about "pedagogical situations", not about "classes" or "lessons" and the maximum number of pedagogical situations would be 15 to 17 per week. Each "pedagogical situation" would be 15 – 20 minutes long (for 5–6 years olds) and 20 to 30 minutes long (for 6–7 years olds).

The topic areas dealing most closely with the matters of self-awareness, social intelligence, cultural awareness, behavior, etc. are *Arts* and *Bulgarian language and literature*. The game-time and sports has also certain mission for building socio-communicative skills for co-operation, interaction and teamwork.

Although *Surrounding world* involves themes related to the areas listed in this template, in fact the activities are aimed mostly at explaining the general social structure, family and group norms, national, local and ethnic traditions. Among other expected outcomes SES defines also *showing trust and tolerance to build the others* as well as *tolerance to children that differ from the majority*.

There is a recurring motif in the SES on Bulgarian language and literature education, both in pre-school and early stage of schooling: "Educational activities aim to guarantee familiarity with national values and traditions in order to preserve and



	strengthen the national identity".
<p>Goals and expectations, level of attainment, statutory requirements, etc. which are connected to the affective domain of learning; please provide information against the core competencies indicated (based on the attached CASEL segmentation; more information can be found on <a href="http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/">http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/</a>)</p> <p>Please note that information is needed only for the categories actually addressed by the curriculum.</p>	<p><b>SELF-MANAGEMENT:</b> Not specifically mentioned, but evaluated and measured in the pre-school testing, which is part of the legal procedure for future first-graders.</p>
	<p><b>SELF-AWARENESS:</b> Part of the expected learning outcomes include the child's ability to partner with a teacher or a peer in a game, to recognize and take into account the emotional state of others.</p> <p>The "Guidelines for Teachers" section says, in the context of the arts, that "from the earliest age children should be drawn to the fact that in the culture, the arts and in particular in the music everyone has the right to his personal taste and preference with respect to the choice of the other. The most important task of the educator is to actively stimulate free-thinking with children".</p>
	<p><b>SOCIAL AWARENESS:</b> The expectations towards children in preschool's subject of "Surrounding world" are related to norms of behavior, "building an adequate idea of close social environment, acquiring a behavioral culture, social skills."</p> <p>Among the expected results of the music activities is to be able to differentiate between "a marsh, a waltz, a horo and a rachenitza (national folklore dances)", which suggests that accenting on Bulgarian national identity in most of the pre-school subjects does not exclude widening of the cultural and social view of children, but rather implies that it is a natural part of the training.</p> <p>Art lessons in pre-school age are aimed at creating an aesthetic culture that allows the child to "recognize accessible works of folk artistic crafts and fine arts; domestic and festive environment and norms of behavior according to their ethnicity [viewed as cultural identity]; relate to the domestic and national holidays and their place in the life of the people."</p>
	<p><b>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:</b> According to the national curriculum, the initial social competencies are embedded mostly in the subjects of Bulgarian language and literature, and social orientation education for pre-school and primary school pupils.</p> <p>There are similar features in the regulations on the requirements for arts and music training.</p> <p>For example, the regulations for the Bulgarian language and literature training define that pre-school pupils are expected to acquire a culture of communication, show politeness, and before they become first-graders, to properly use words of abstract or generic meaning.</p>



	<p>RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: Not explicitly covered in the curriculum.</p>
<p>Topics and themes covered, incl. any domains and issues addressed</p>	<p>Some of the goals set for pre-school pupils in the domain of self and social awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exhibit tolerance to children and adults with differences"</li> <li>● Avoid conflicts or - if necessary, solve them</li> <li>● Express their right of choice and initiative</li> <li>● Names personal, official and national holidays, recognises local customs and traditions</li> <li>● Recognises the national anthem and responds by expressing national pride and shows respect, connects specific holidays and celebrations with relevant personalities and events</li> <li>● Explains nature conservation human efforts and care for clean environment.</li> </ul>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Although identifying with a group, an ethnicity, Peoples and a state, whose full-fledged citizen the child is or one day will be, is of great importance for the child and its future social role, it is worth noting that the regulations, related to state educational requirements in pre-school and primary school education do not specifically mention values, such as empathy, protection of human rights, freedoms.</p> <p>Again, it is stated that the topics studied are an opportunity to provide "acquaintance with national values and traditions in order to preserve and validate the national identity", without looking to build a sympathetic attitude and acquainting the differences between people.</p>



## Curriculum Analysis – Bulgaria

Primary School	
<p>Introductory overview of the curriculum (e.g. what is the focus, what are the approaches, how is it delivered, etc.)</p>	<p>Primary education subjects from the <i>culture and educative domain</i> “Social Sciences and Civil Education”, relevant to the focus of this analysis are:</p> <p>For the 1st grade - Homeland</p> <p>For the 2nd grade: Surrounding world (the subject provides basic training in the field of Natural Sciences and Ecology)</p> <p>In 3rd and 4th grade: Individual and Society (This is an integral subject. It provides initial knowledge on human relationships, society structure and the organization of contemporary Bulgarian state. It sets the foundations for further studies of History, Civilization and Geography, and Economics).</p> <p>It is evident that the curriculum initially focuses on the near and the familiar areas of knowledge and later spreads to broader concepts.</p> <p>In middle school stage within the <i>culture and educative domain</i> “Social Sciences and Civil Education” are introduced subjects like "History and Civilization" and "Geography and Economics".</p> <p>In the secondary school stage additionally to these subjects are introduced also the philosophy related ones such as "Psychology and Logic", "Ethics and Law", and "World and Individuality".</p> <p>It is just at that stage of education when the SES deal with ethical norms, moral self-determination, developing the ability for autonomous and responsible moral choice, etc.</p> <p>The Bulgarian language and literature education (the subject is singled out as a most relevant example) in the primary stage of education (first to fourth grade) contains many references to the development of an emotional intelligence of the student. However, the emphasis is placed particularly on building a sense of national belonging through culture. In terms of primary education curriculum the view of Bulgarian literary tradition as part of the European cultural heritage is also mentioned. There is also an optional mother tongue curriculum for Roma, Turkish and Armenian languages.</p> <p>Unfortunately, both SES and educational program for the primary school stage do not contain references to students behavior and attitudes, but define “learning outcomes”. Both documents describe what student knows and can do as a result of participation of educational process and enumerate the basic concepts that he/she acquires, but does not address the aspect of attitudes (positive or negative) to the topics and concepts studied.</p>



<p>Goals and expectations, level of attainment, statutory requirements, etc. which are connected to the affective domain of learning; please provide information against the core competencies indicated (based on the attached CASEL segmentation; more information can be found on <a href="http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/">http://www.casel.org/core-competencies/</a>)</p> <p>Please note that information is needed only for the categories actually addressed by the curriculum.</p>	<p><b>SELF-MANAGEMENT:</b> Not specifically mentioned, but implied in the programme.</p> <p>A new law on general education is introduced since year 2016 and it is to be gradually implemented by 2020. It includes a programme of “Inclusive education”, dealing with problematic behavior or inability of the students to meet the minimum requirements to pass a grade or showing other recurring problems in the academic process or behavior.</p> <p>There are few educational programmes that mention emotional intelligence, social awareness and the relationship skills of young children or teenagers and young adults. There are no mandatory preventive practices suggested or integrated in the curriculum. Still, in-service teachers can pass a training in a short qualification course, dedicated to such problems but it is not obligatory for them.</p> <p>First graders are evaluated by an entry test, conducted by a school counselor, which includes examining the behavior and the overall intelligence of the child. The results of that test are not available to the parent, unless there is a serious problematic matter, recognized by the counselor. The results are handed to the primary teacher who will be responsible for the class.</p>
	<p><b>SELF-AWARENESS:</b> The statement above is valid here as well. In the domains of Bulgarian language and literature, music and fine arts education, emphasis is placed on “preservation and strengthening of the national identity” through the ensured “acquaintance with national values and traditions”. Familiarity with the cultural, ethnic and national diversity within the country is not mentioned explicitly, but can be recognized indirectly as a part of the traditional lifestyles and culture (folklore) within Bulgarian lands.</p> <p>It doesn't seem to be taken into account that the national identity of preschool and primary school students might differ from Bulgarian or they might belong to different confession than the Orthodox. References to the Christian culture and understanding the role of Christianity for the cultural identity and the every-day life are also among the expected learning outcomes (ref. educational program for Individual and Society, III grade), although among the Bulgarian citizens there are also minorities belonging to different confessions (the biggest number of them – with Turkish and Roma ethnicity – being Muslim).</p>
	<p><b>SOCIAL AWARENESS:</b> The content of the "Social orientation" school subject is conceived as a means of "successful adaptation and adequate social behavior" of children in society. The secondary legislation devoted to this discipline refers to the upbringing of tolerance towards "children who are different, good will, kindness, understanding and compliance with group</p>



	<p>norms."</p> <p>What are these norms and differences is somewhat specified as the child must "recognize the domestic and festive environment and norms of behavior according to their ethnicity, relate to the domestic and national holidays and their place in people's lives, personal, official and national holidays, local customs, and traditions, participate in official holidays dedicated to individuals and events (local and national heroes)."</p> <p>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: Not specifically mentioned in the study programmes, but integrated in university teacher's trainings (non obligatory).</p> <p>RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING: Not specifically mentioned in the curriculum.</p>
<p>Topics and themes covered, incl. any domains and issues addressed</p>	<p>By studying Bulgarian language and literature at school is aimed at</p> <p>Achieving a certain level of socio-cultural competence, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquisition of common humanitarian values, forming socially Responsible person;</li> <li>- building a clear awareness of national identity, so far Bulgarian language and literature are some of the most important means by which this</li> </ul>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Values education, social competences and environmental issues are incorporated in the subjects, related to "Social sciences and civic education" domain such as "Homeland", "Individual and Society", "History and Civilization", "Geography and Economics", "Personality and World". These subjects are introduced in different school stages moving from integrated (typical for the primary school) to specialized.</p> <p>The requirements mentioned in the set of regulations, concerning primary education curriculum, focuses on student's ethnicity and strictly national literary development. Assuming "norms of conduct according to their ethnicity" is specifically mentioned as an expected result of the educative process. The process of studying traditions and national history in the spirit of civil society and shared civilization values is saved for the higher grades of the middle and secondary education.</p> <p>The guidelines and standards, dealing with pre-school and early childhood education, do not envisage at first sight acquainting pupils with diverse ethnic, national and other identities, coexisting in a cultural diversity.</p> <p>A more careful look at the new Law for pre-primary and school education shows that these topics are not covered by the <i>general subjects' educational programs</i> (adopted by the Ministry of education and science), but fell into the group of subjects from the "extended" or "profiled" programs, which "expand and complement content that is integrated into other subjects". The</p>





educational programs for these subjects are endorsed by the school headmaster. Among these are “subjects in the field of global, civil, health and intercultural education, entrepreneurship, personal finance management and programming, protection of the country, population and the environment, teaching subjects that form national self-esteem, patriotic spirit and patriotism in children and students...” (ref. Law on pre-school and school education, art.76, p.5).

Although it may seem that schools have significant freedom of choice on the content of the curriculum, the fact is that the textbooks and educational aids, which teachers are allowed to use at school are only such that have an endorsement by the Ministry of Education and Science.