

## EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR 2020/2021 SCHOOL YEAR

The main results from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) annual comprehensive surveys characterizing the activity of educational institutions are as follows:

- In 2020/2021 school year in pre-primary education (kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools) were enrolled 215.7 thousand children.
- In 2020, the number of basic education graduates was 59.9 thousand students and graduates from general and vocational schools were respectively 25.5 and 19.6 thousand students.
- In 2020/2021 academic year, there were 219.8 thousand students enrolled in the different tertiary education levels ('professional bachelor', 'bachelor' and 'master').
- As of 31.12.2020, for acquiring a 'Doctor' educational and scientific degree in the country were trained 6 570 persons, of whom 608 were foreign citizens.

### Pre-primary education

As of 1.12.2020, in the country were functioning 1 823 independent kindergartens with director. In pre-primary education, conducted in kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools, there were enrolled 215.7 thousand children, of which 111.6 thousand or 51.8% were boys. In comparison with the previous year the number of children decreased by 1.0% (Figure 1).

The coverage of children in this educational level estimated by the group net enrolment rate<sup>1</sup> for the 2020/2021 school year was 78.1% and compared to the previous school year decreased by 0.6 percentage points.

The average number of children in a kindergarten in the country was 118 as in the urban areas was significantly larger (152) than in the rural areas (61). A group was formed by average 23 children, respectively - 25 in urban and 19 in rural areas.

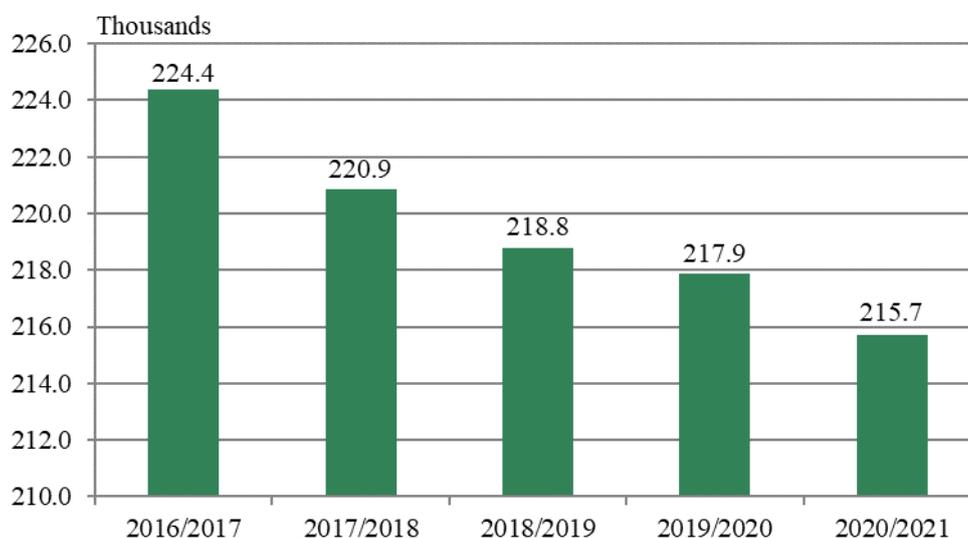
The teaching personnel employed in kindergartens were 20.1 thousand and in comparison with the previous school year remained almost unchanged (increased with 44 persons). Kindergarten teachers were 18.8 thousand, or 93.5% of all personnel in kindergartens.

In 2020/2021 school year in the country were functioning 110 licensed private kindergartens or with 4 more than in the previous year. There were enrolled 4 874 children or 2.3% of the total number of children in kindergartens.

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<sup>1</sup> The group net enrollment rate of children in kindergartens is calculated as a percentage of the number of children in kindergartens in the age group 3 - 6 years to number of population in the same age group.

**Figure 1. Children in kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools**



## General education

As of 1.10.2020 there were classes in 1 948 general education schools<sup>2</sup>. Out of them 129 were primary schools, 1 151 - basic schools, 71 - integrated schools, 114 upper secondary and 483 - secondary schools. In comparison with the previous school year the total number of general education schools decreased by 15. The students enrolled in general programmes were 565.0 thousand, of which 79.6 thousand in rural areas. There were 22 pupils on average for one class in the daily general education schools.

During the 2019/2020 school year 13.0 thousand students left the general education schools. The largest relative shares were the share of the students who left because had gone abroad and of those who left because of family reasons - each by 5.4 thousand or by 41.9%, followed by the share of students who left because of unwillingness to study - 1.4 thousand, or 11.1% of the total number of leaving students.

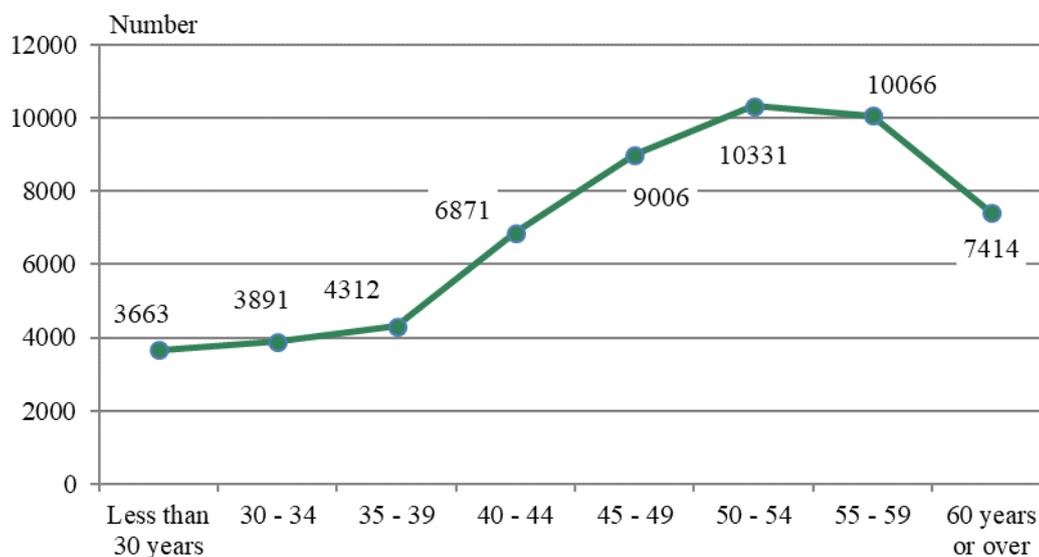
In 2020, from the general education schools with basic education graduated 59.9 thousand students and with upper-secondary education - 25.5 thousand students.

The relative share of children in general education schools who studied foreign languages in primary grades (I - IV) was 83.6%, as the largest share came from those who studied English - 92.4%.

The total number of teaching staff (incl. directors and deputy directors with teaching activity) employed in general education schools during the 2020/2021 school year was 55.6 thousand. Of which 95.0% with education-qualification degree 'Bachelor' or 'Master', 4.2% were with education-qualification degree - 'Professional Bachelor' or an equivalent degree in the past and 0.8% were with secondary education. In the teaching profession, women were predominant - 85.2% of the total number of teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Incl. the Bulgarian schools abroad, financed by state.

**Figure 2. Teaching staff in general schools by age groups in 2020/2021 school year**



As of 1.10.2020 there were 97 active private general education schools in the country, out of them 6 primary schools, 38 basic, 1 integrated, 23 high schools and 29 secondary schools. There were enrolled totally 12 053 students or 2.1% from the total number of students in general education.

### Vocational education and training (VET)

Vocational education and training during the school year 2020/2021 was carried out in 21 art schools, 25 sport schools, 353 vocational gymnasiums and 19 vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education. The total number of students in there was 138.7 thousand.

Boys were predominant in vocational education and training and were 60.3% of the total number of students in this educational level.

In 2020, 19.6 thousand persons graduated with secondary education from art schools, sport schools and vocational gymnasiums. Level of professional qualification was acquired by:

- First level of professional qualification from vocational classes - 390 students;
- Second and third level of professional qualification - respectively by 2.3 and 11.9 thousand students;
- Fourth level of professional qualification in vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education - 581 students.

From the total number of students who acquired third level of professional qualification, the highest relative share was of those who studied specialties in the field<sup>3</sup> of 'Engineering and engineering trades'(27.0%), followed by those in the field of 'Business and administration' (21.5%).

The relative shares of students who acquired fourth level of professional qualification were highest in the fields of 'Security services' - 76.2% and 'Business and administration' - 11.1%.

<sup>3</sup> About vocational education and training the fields of education are presented in accordance to the List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training (approved by Order No. 09-413/12.05.2003 of the Minister of Education and Science).

During the 2020/2021 school year, 855 students were enrolled in 23 private vocational gymnasiums and private vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education, or 0.6% of the total number of students in vocational education.

During the present school year the total number of teachers (incl. directors and deputy directors with teaching activity) in vocational education was 11.9 thousand, of which 94.9% were with acquired educational qualification degrees ‘Bachelor’ or ‘Master’.

In vocational training programmes against payment for acquiring a level of professional qualification in vocational training centres, vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges in 2020 were enrolled 10.2 thousand students aged 16 years or more. According to the level of professional qualification, their distribution was as follows: first level - 3.9 thousand, second level - 2.7 thousand, third level - 3.6 thousand and forth level - 86 persons.

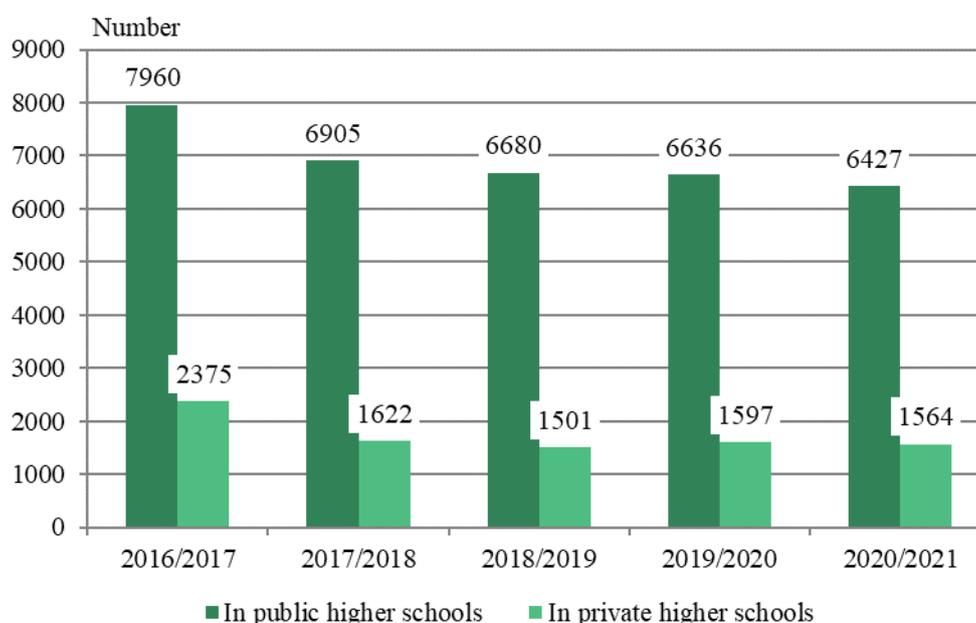
### Tertiary education

In 2020/2021 academic year, the number of students enrolled in Bulgaria for the four educational-qualification degrees (‘Professional bachelor’, ‘Bachelor’, ‘Master’ and ‘Doctor’) was 226.4 thousand and compared to the previous academic year, their number remained almost the same.

#### *Colleges (‘Professional bachelor’ educational-qualification degree)*

In 2020/2021 academic year, for acquiring a professional bachelor’s educational-qualification degree, in colleges there were enrolled 7 991 students. In comparison with the previous year, their number decreased by 242 persons or by 2.9%. Out of the total number of students in colleges, 1 564 persons or 19.6% were enrolled in private institutions (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Students in colleges**



In 2020, with a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree had graduated 1 712 students, of whom 60.3% were women. The highest number of graduates was in specialities within the following fields of education<sup>4</sup>:

- 'Health' - 655 persons (38.3%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 307 persons (17.9%);
- 'Personal services' - 249 persons (14.5%);
- 'Business and administration' - 201 persons (11.7%);
- 'Education' - 107 persons (6.3%).

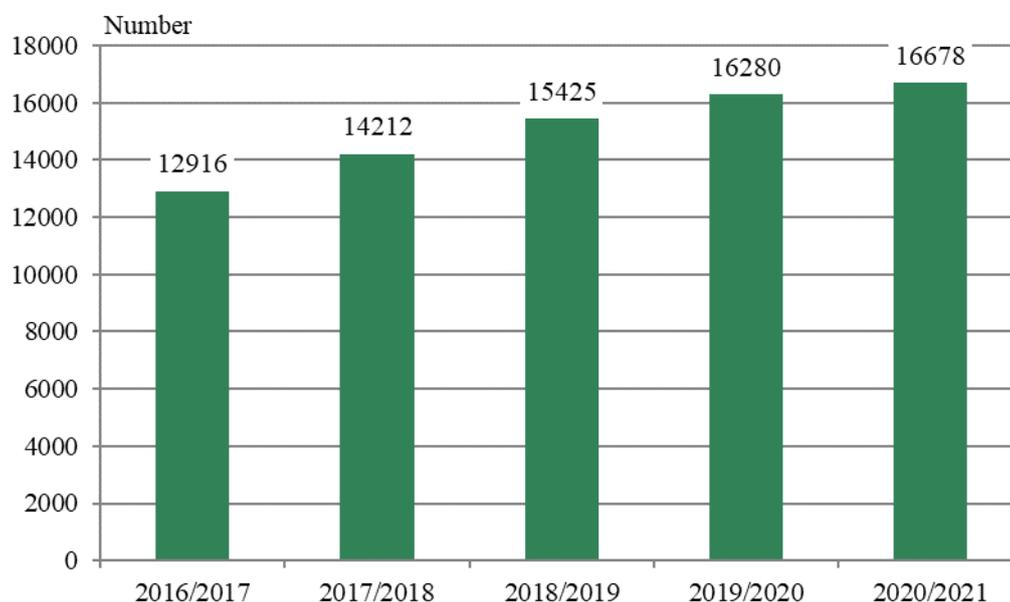
The number of teaching staff in colleges was 677, of them 305 persons or 45.1% were on a full time employment.

#### ***Universities and equivalent higher schools ('Bachelor' and 'Master' educational-qualification degrees)***

In 2020/2021 academic year, there were 211.8 thousand students in universities and specialized higher schools studying for bachelor and master's educational-qualification degrees. In private educational institutions were enrolled 26.1 thousand or 12.3% of the students.

Students - Bulgarian citizens were 195.1 thousand or 92.1% of all students in universities and specialized higher schools and in comparison to the previous year, their number remained almost unchanged. Foreign students were 16.7 thousand, which is 2.4% more than in the previous year and 29.1% more than in the 2016/2017 academic year (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Foreign students in universities and specialized higher schools**



The largest share of foreign students came from Greece (24.5%), followed by the United Kingdom (16.1%), Germany (9.2%), Ukraine (7.0%) and the Republic of North Macedonia (6.1%). Foreign students in the country choose mainly health-related studies, as 62.1% of them were studying specialties in this field and 48.0% of the total number were studying Medicine.

<sup>4</sup> According to Classification of fields of education and training, 2015 (State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016)

In 2020, a total of 43.5 thousand persons graduated from universities and specialised higher schools in the country, of whom 23.2 thousand with a bachelor's and 20.4 thousand with a master's degree.

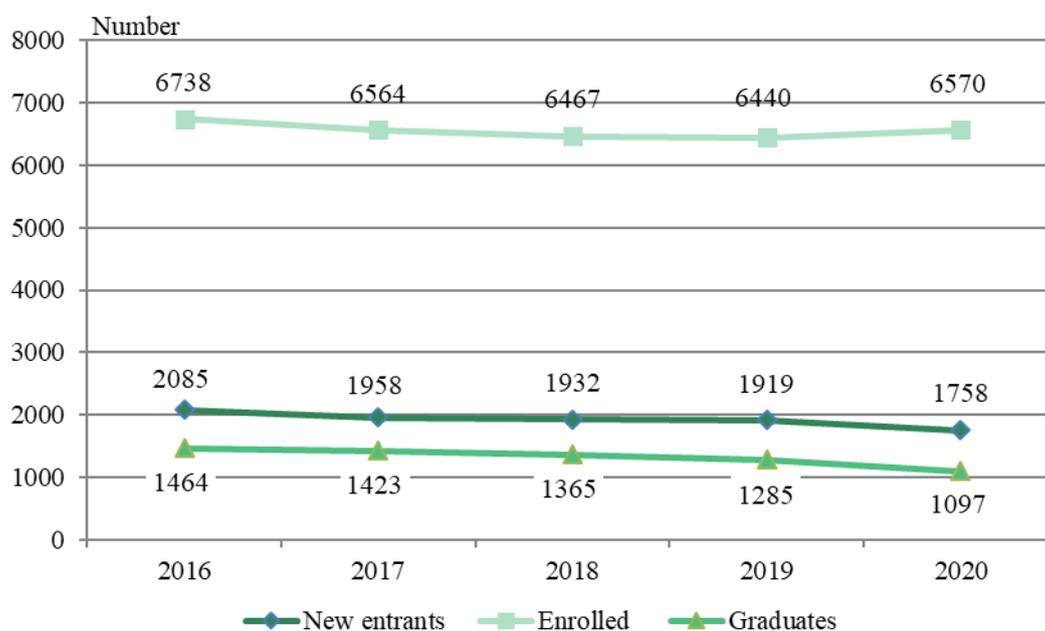
The number of graduates was highest in the following fields of education: 'Business and Administration' (25.4%), 'Education' (13.0%) and 'Social and behavioural sciences' (11.2%).

In 2020/2021 academic year, the number of academic staff in universities and specialized higher schools was 20.0 thousand, of which 50.9% were women. On a full time employment were 12.6 thousand or 62.7% of the total.

### ***Educational and scientific degree 'Doctor'***

As of 31.12.2020, there were 6 570 Ph.D. students enrolled in the country (Figure 5), of which 52.6% were women. Full-time students were 3 607 persons, or 54.9% of the total. The largest share of Ph.D. students was recorded in Sofia (stolitsa) district - 55.7%, followed by Varna (11.1%) and Plovdiv districts (9.2%).

**Figure 5. New entrants, enrolled and graduates in Ph.D. degree**



The foreign Ph.D. students were 608 or 9.3% of the total number. The largest share came from Greece - 17.3%, followed by the Republic of North Macedonia and Kosovo (by 9.4% each), Israel (8.7%) and Albania (8.1%).

In private institutions were trained 4.0% of the Ph.D. students. Out of them 111 persons, or 42.5% were foreigners.

In 2020, a 'Doctor' degree was acquired by 1 097 persons of whom 598, or 54.5%, were women. The largest shares of graduates were recorded in the following fields of education:

- 'Social and behavioural sciences' - 157 persons (14.3%);
- 'Health' - 156 persons (14.2%);
- 'Education' - 112 persons (10.2%);
- 'Business and administration' - 92 persons (8.4%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 77 persons (7.0%).

## Methodological notes

Education statistics was developed on the basis of the Regulation No 452/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning, the current legal basis in Bulgaria in the area of education, the International Standard Classification of Education - revision 2011 (ISCED 2011) and the concomitant methodological instructions.

ISCED was designed to serve as a framework to classify educational activities as defined in programmes and the resulting qualifications into internationally agreed categories.

The National Statistical Institute conducts yearly exhaustive surveys that characterize the activity of the educational institutions.

Educational institutions directly conduct teaching via educational programmes to the enrolments in organized classes (groups) or via distance mode of learning. Those programmes lead to attainment of the educational degree and/or level of professional qualification. Non-formal training and informal learning are not covered by the scope of the educational system according to the used definitions in ISCED 2011.

With its surveys NSI aiming to determine the number of students in the educational system as of a given date of observation. This is the basis for calculating the internationally accepted indicator 'Participation Rate of the Population in the Educational System', which represents the relative share of students enrolled from a certain age group in relation to the number of the constant population of the country in the same age group.

For more information and data on education, visit NSI's webpage (<http://www.nsi.bg/en>), section 'Education and Lifelong Learning' as well as the information system 'Infostat' ([https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x\\_2=42](https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=42)).