



BULGARIA

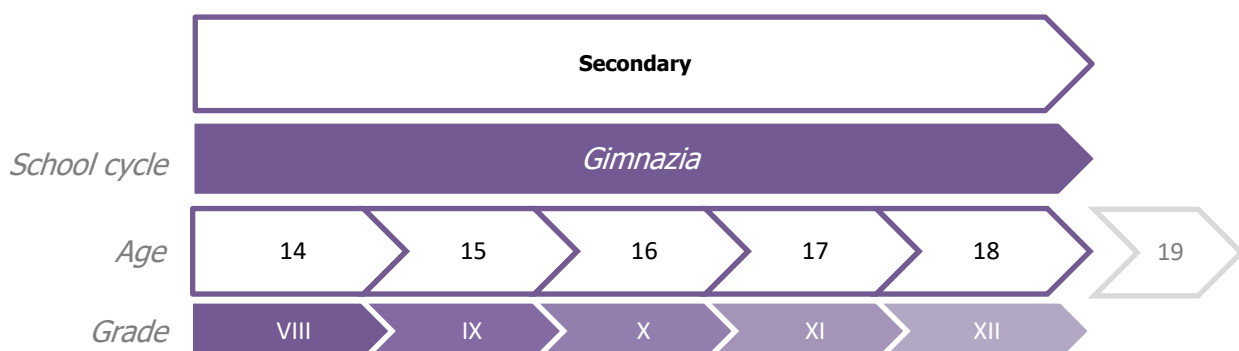
INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Contents

<u>GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM</u>	1
<u>INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM BULGARIA</u>	2
<u>RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD</u>	3
<u>INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN BULGARIA</u>	4
<u>TESTIMONIAL</u>	5

The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

General secondary education is a five-year cycle divided into two stages. It is provided by general and profile/specialised secondary schools (*Gimnazia* or *Profilirana gimnazia*).²

School education is compulsory until the end of the first stage, at the age of 16 (grade X): pupils who have successfully graduated from grade X receive a certificate for having completed the first and compulsory stage of secondary education, which enables them to continue their studies in the upper stage (grades XI and XII) as well as to pursue additional training to acquire professional qualification.

Graduation and Certification

A national assessment is conducted at the end of the first stage of secondary education (grade X). It consists of a test in Bulgarian language and mathematics. In addition, each pupil can take an exam in a foreign language or IT technologies.

In order to be awarded a secondary education diploma, pupils must complete grade XII and pass two state matriculation exams in subjects studied throughout the second stage (upper secondary), namely Bulgarian language and literature and a second subject chosen by the pupil³.

The diploma provides access to higher education but some universities have entrance exams for certain faculties.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM BULGARIA

Age and grade

Pupils usually go on exchange when they are in X grade (16/17 years old)

Registration in the sending school

Schools have the autonomy to permit pupils to interrupt a school year to go on a mobility abroad. Before departure, the school principal will outline to you the conditions for retaining your place in the school. In order to have the period abroad recognised, you must continue to be enrolled in your sending school and agree with the school principal on opportunities for self-paced study, distance learning, general support and additional consultations on school subjects in order to ensure successful completion of the school year on return.

Funding for the sending school

² Law on Pre-School and School Education from 13 October 2015, <https://www.mon.bg/bg/57> Закон да предучилищно и училищно образование.

³ foreign language, mathematics, IT, physics and astronomy, biology and health education, chemistry and environmental protection, history and civilisations, geography and economics, philosophy.

Exchange pupils are considered to be fulfilling their studies individually/through independent forms of education (e.g. home-schooling). Funding is therefore provided to schools after completion of the annual examinations, which are held to assess the subjects of the school curriculum⁴.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting less than 6 months, or between 6 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 6 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Bulgaria. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing this timing are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁵ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods of less than 6 months. For periods of between 6 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, on the top of a possible learning agreement.

Recognition of learning periods abroad within secondary school is regulated by a national legislation issued in 2016⁶. The general principle is that on return, you need to provide evidence that you have fulfilled the requirements of the national curriculum, either by passing the required subjects while abroad, or through exams on your return from the mobility.

Periods of between 2 and less than 6 months

If you go abroad for periods of shorter than 6 months and you return before the end of the school year, you can be re-admitted to school and finish the school year with your peers. In this case, you need to take exams to ensure that you have learned the contents of the subjects you have missed while abroad.

Periods of between 6 months and a full school year

On return from the exchange, you have to submit a transcript of marks from the host school to the competent regional authority in your area. The Regional Management of Education body is responsible for making a decision regarding the recognition of the study period abroad and decides whether you need to pass equivalence exams within the school year. If the school year finishes less than three months after your return, then the Regional Management of Education body can permit you to pass the equivalence exams before the end of the next school year. Additional documents which can be requested are a learning agreement (drafted before or during the mobility experience),

⁴ ORDINANCE for financing institutions in the pre-school and school education system from 2017.

⁵ within a school-to-school partnerships, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned

⁶ НАРЕДБА № 11 от 1.09.2016 г. за оценяване на резултатите от обучението на ученицит, Ordinance n.11 of September 1, 2016 for evaluation of the learning outcomes of students, <https://www.mon.bg/bg/59>

an official translation of the transcript of marks with apostille⁷ from the host country, an overview of the curriculum of studies in the host country including a detailed description of each subject.

In order to be admitted to the next grade, two conditions need to be fulfilled:

- The learning period abroad is recognised;
- You pass the equivalence exams which needs to be taken in accordance with the Bulgarian curriculum.

In general, Bulgarian pupils who go through the recognition procedure need to pass at least two equivalence exams (Bulgarian language and literature, History and civilisation, Geography and economy of Bulgaria). Equivalent exams are also taken in the general education subjects which have not been studied in the host school.

If you do not take or fail the equivalence exams, you need to repeat your last school year.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN BULGARIA

Registration in the host school

As a hosted exchange pupil, you are enrolled as a regular pupil in the school based on documented completion of previous school years in your home country, and on the type of exchange programme. You can be placed in the last grade (XII).

Funding for the host school

Schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled, so if the exchange pupils that are hosted in the school are enrolled, the school gets funding accordingly.

Certification for hosted pupils

You receive a certificate of attendance and might be also assessed, depending on the length of your stay.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

If you wish to continue and complete your secondary education in Bulgaria, you need to present documents attesting to your schooling in previous years, and reference to the subjects studied with the number of classes and the marks obtained. In addition, you have to take exams in Bulgarian language and literature, History and civilisation, Geography and economy of Bulgaria. After passing these exams, you can be admitted to the two matriculation exams to get a school-leaving certificate. If you pass the State matriculation exams, the school will also issue you with a diploma for secondary education. However, this is a rare practice.

⁷ Apostille is still needed to legalize school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU.

TESTIMONIAL

Andrey from Bulgaria: a full school year in France

"It was a new challenge for me. I discovered a new world."

I participated in the exchange to discover a new world and to challenge myself. To prepare for the exchange, I read a book about Normandy and attended a pre-departure seminary, which was extremely useful. I had a great team and I was given valuable advice.

When I first arrived, reality was very different from my expectations. I wasn't used to living in a small village, as I have always lived in a big city, but with time I discovered the advantages of village life. I had some troubles communicating at first, not in French, but with body language! In Bulgaria we say "yes" and "no" by turning our head and nodding in the opposite way than rest of the world, so when I said "yes" with my head everybody understood "no", which created some funny situations.

Recognition made easier by the teachers' help

Upon my return I had to deal with the school's bureaucracy, but apart from that, I could enrol back in my school and in my class, without repeating the year. My teachers helped me a lot in that regard. Looking back on the exchange, I remember it as a very unique and valuable experience. I also made long-lasting friendships. A recommendation to future exchange students: do not compare your new reality with the one back home, just enjoy it.

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