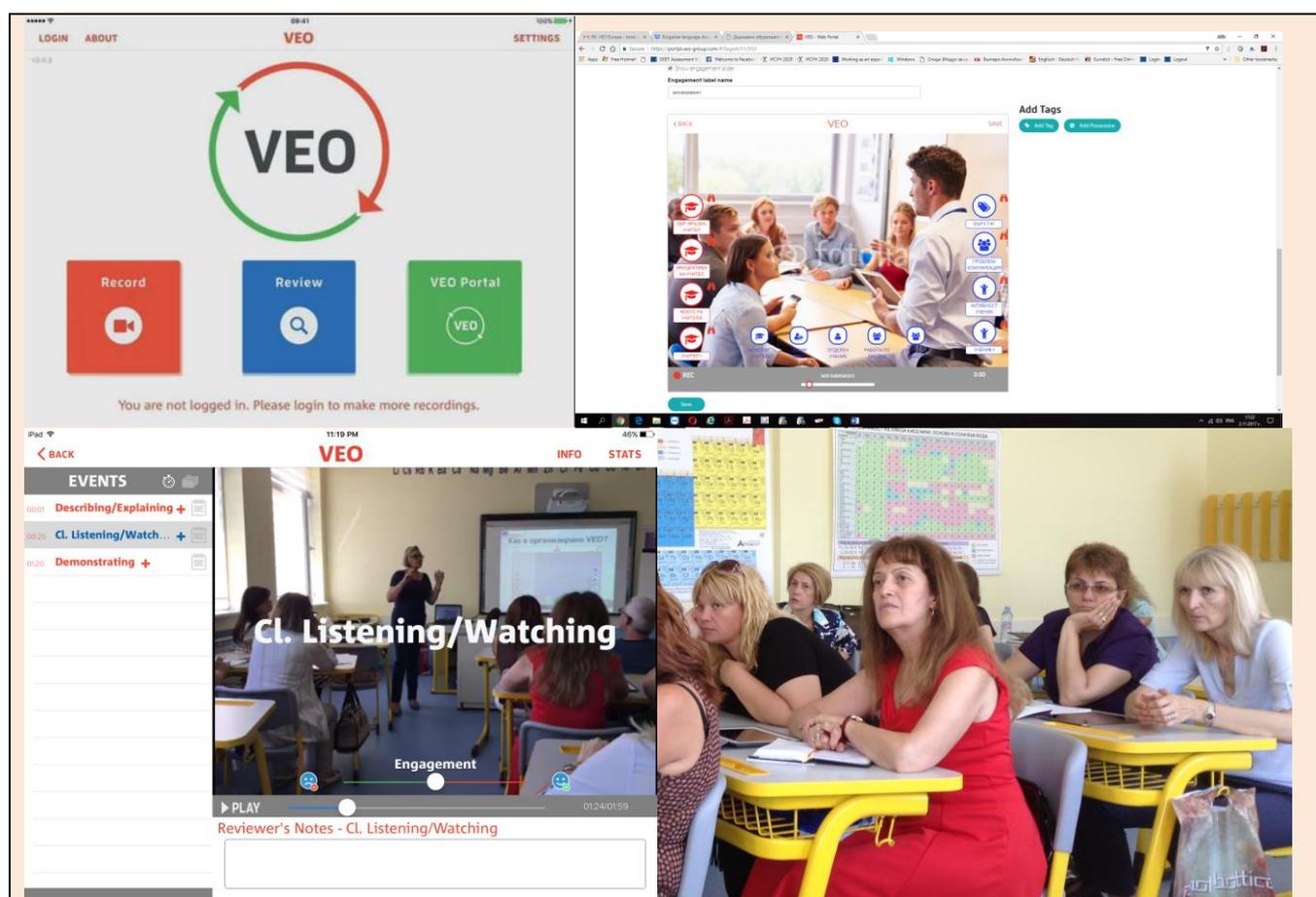




## VEO Europa

### Case Study Bulgaria

As part of the VEO Europe project, all partner organisations have produced case studies illustrating the use of the project resources, the partners' support and the overall impact on the associated schools involved in this project. This document provides information about a case study from the schools in Bulgaria which participated in the project.



#### Context of the participating school:

The four participating schools in this project have different profile and background, but they have a common motivation to improve their school environment by using new technologies and innovative approach in teaching and learning. The VEO Project offered to the partaking schools a good occasion to participate in innovative project that has the objective to apply the VEO App in schools and improve the professional skills of teachers and school management. Participating schools are as follow:

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1. [Case Study School 1] The school is state financed, specialised in Mathematics, Natural Sciences and intensive foreign languages learning and educates students aged 12 – 19
2. [Case Study School 2] The school is state financed, specialised in Economics, Finance and intensive foreign languages learning and educates students aged 14 – 19
3. [Case Study School 3] is state financed school and one of the biggest secondary schools in the region. The students are 6 – 19 years old.
4. [Case Study School 4] is a state financed primary school for students aged 7-15. The school is one of the oldest in the region and has rich educational traditions. The school has experience in other EU projects and was very happy to participate in the project and test the VEO app in its school environment.

All the participating headmasters and teachers involved in the project activities worked with enthusiasm and very active in all the workshops. They actively tested the practical training materials and uploaded recordings onto the VEO online platform. All schools worked in close relation with Haskovo Regional Directorate of Education. The other part of the project participants come from this educational authority and worked active on dissemination events and promoted VEO to schools in the Haskovo region. In addition, the main participation aim for the experts from Regional Directorate of Education in Haskovo was to approbate how VEO App can be used in their controlling function as experts. On the other hand, they advised teachers in their daily work as well as carry about the CPD in schools in the particular area of their expertise.

The former Head of the educational authority, Mr. Panayotov is part of the national experts' team who developed the new educational standards for Bulgaria according the new educational law. Her presented the VEO and its application for educational purposes on the annual school head teachers conference in Bulgaria in 2016 and 2017 about new technologies in education. As a whole the school principals in Bulgaria have the freedom to decide quite a lot of questions connected to the school management, teachers' appointment and CPD support policy of the school. This support basically depends on the financial decisions of school principals and their management team, but in some cases on the personal decision and motivation of each teacher and/or principal or vice principal. On the conferences were discussed questions about the use of VEO in daily school principals work and how it can be helpful to their vice principals and the school management teams.

EU educational projects have had a positive impact on educational policy in Bulgaria. The participating schools in VEO Project have some experience with Erasmus+ KA1 and LLP projects and this was the critical point for them to participate and to involve teachers with different profiles and professional background. The VEO team in Bulgaria decided to select schools from different educational levels: one gymnasium, one vocational school, one general high school and one primary schools. Our focus was not only on improving the practical experience of both trainee teachers in initial teaching education (ITE) and teachers in the first year of employment – newly qualified teachers (NQT), but also on staff monitoring and raising the school's internal standards, exchange of good practises in the school departments and between schools and help the school management teams to improve their controlling work and CPD policy.

Our selection criteria were: results in the last two school years on state exams achieved by students, ICT facilities, participation in EU projects, assessment of the school management in the last two school years prepared by the experts of the Regional Directorate of Education in Haskovo, number of interested teachers based on previous filled questionnaire and presentations about the VEO project objectives and intellectual outputs. The selection procedure was prepared by the VEO Bulgaria project team.

Other aspects for participating school in the VEO project and its impact:

1. In Bulgaria schools do not have experience with using such type of technology like VEO App to develop their CPD policy in order to improve the teaching and learning quality. They developed their own CPD policy and plans by using the results of VEO videos, diaries etc prepared by their teachers.
2. The coaching and mentoring model is quite new for Bulgarian schools. This model was developed and presented in the new educational law in order to provide individual support to NQTs. It is quite difficult to set aims for improvement of confidence, motivation and performance for Bulgarian teachers in this context, because the system is rather inflexible and conservative. VEO was helpful in this aspect as well.
3. The VEO project provided opportunities for more experienced teachers not only to take on a coaching and mentoring role by using VEO App, but gave them the opportunity to work on and improve their own skills and also enabled them to reflect on their own practice.
4. VEO Project created great opportunity for new teachers to exchange good practises and to improve their class environment.

#### **Support provided to Project Participants in Partner Schools before using VEO App:**

Teachers in Bulgaria have not additional support from their schools in order to develop or improve their ICT skills. Using ICT technologies in Bulgaria NQTs have practices before their first job but they don't receive any help when they start work. The public CPD-system offers courses and seminars but there isn't personal assistance in schools.

The support before using VEO for new and qualified teachers from the participating schools involved mainly the usual support for Bulgarian educational system: appointment of a more experienced colleague who introduced the newcomer into the specifics of the school curricula for the particular subject, facilitation of ICT technology and innovations in the school education is not well developed in Bulgarian schools, the support included communication with parents and pupils on different topics connected to a programme for innovative schools newly introduced by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science.

There's usually no professional follow-up and support not only for NQTs, but as well for qualified teachers. In Bulgarian schools are usually used mutual visits to the classrooms of more experienced colleagues in different subject areas followed by some discussion within the subject department, but it is not the daily case in all of our participating schools.

#### **Training, impact and implemented measures:**

Project activities in Bulgaria started with training seminars on VEO functionalities where the core group of teachers from the four partner schools learned the basics of the app. Initially most felt frustrated because they had never had to use video technology before. Another setback was the fact that Android is much more popular in the country and very few people had any experience using Apple products. In addition, the English language use was some obstacle in the seminars, because most of the Bulgarian teachers do not use English in their communication.

Our training sessions were hosted by the Regional Directorate of Education in Haskovo. The teacher training included face-to-face working sessions, seminars to deliver training and to respond to individual needs as well as online sessions. The impact of this was evaluated through questionnaires, discussion and feedback. The impact of the support offered is that the participating teachers can nurture their developing teaching confidence and skills.

After this project the participants showed overall satisfaction with their achievement and expressed willingness to continue to use the VEO app as the school year goes by and new various challenges arise.

The follow-up comments on the trainings played significant role for improvement of pedagogical cooperation and skills within the school community in the Haskovo region, and the exchange of specific pedagogical skills and techniques.

The testing of the training modules was very successful thanks to the schools' active involvement into the project activities and the given feedback on the training modules. Participating schools introduced the VEO Platform and App to their neighbour schools in the particular area.

### **Training, impact and implemented measures from an individual teacher's perspective:**

Not all teachers were active on the VEO Platform, because this is unusual for their daily work in Bulgaria, so that our conclusion is that the most active teachers have to involve their colleagues. Another obstacle was the low ICT culture and skills of Bulgarian teachers, which need serious improvement. Therefore, some of them were not sure in their qualities by using VEO. The other older participants felt quite comfortable with using the VEO app in her work. Most of them described their first videos as shocking and said that they noticed things in their own teaching style they had never even thought about before.

One of the very positive aspects of the VEO project for some of the participating teachers in Bulgaria was the meaningful professional discussions that started after using the App and after receiving feedback from their students and colleagues. Further the VEO App helped them in their relationships within the school and their professional development. The participating schools formed a VEO project teams in their schools and disseminated the VEO use and benefits among their colleagues from neighbour schools.

What teachers found really useful was the opportunity to showcase their work and share their best practices with teachers, students and parents. Some of the schools started discussing ideas about making series of topic specific videos, for example 'How I teach English in 9<sup>th</sup> grade' etc.

The VEO app was also used to record and monitor the behaviour of students in a different learning environment. Much of the teachers think that using VEO in the classroom offers huge opportunities for CPD, teachers learning style improvement and personal development. Seeing yourself from another perspective for the first time might be stressful but it is generally a very rewarding experience because it enables you to improve as a professional. Some of the head teachers and educational experts in this project say that in VEO could turn into a very powerful monitoring tool for schools, educational authorities and could definitely be used as an instrument for internal qualification and exchange of good practices and between schools of similar profile.

### **Support provided to Teachers after implementing VEO App:**

It is important for the Regional Directorate of Education to develop a support system for new teachers in their first years of pedagogical carrier as well as for experienced teachers outside of universities and create effective CPD environment. Working collaboratively has provided real understanding about the need to facilitate and support those new teachers to the profession to ensure recruitment and retention into the teaching profession.

The VEO App was rated as very useful for this purpose in schools in Haskovo region as well as for the controlling work of the educational experts from the Regional Directorate of Education. In addition, after using the VEO App most of the school teachers were satisfied with the opportunity to record videos of themselves and of their colleagues from the particular subject school department and to use this videos for reflection and improvement of their class work.

The Haskovo Regional Directorate of Education will continue to work with other schools in their region on CPD using VEO. The Directorate will provide support for teachers and head teachers by organizing online training sessions and growing the VEO Bulgaria community.

In order to ensure sustainable results of the VEO Project the Directorate will provide support to schools to implement the developed training modules from the VEO Handbook in Bulgarian language. Very important is the fact that the VEO platform was translated into Bulgarian language and this way all teachers and school principals can use VEO in Bulgarian language what will enable them to create their own tag-sets related to their school profile and teaching aims.

The VEO e-book is designed to be used as open source resource in English language. Thus it will be useful only for English speaking teachers in some schools in Bulgaria. If there is a resource for translating this e-book into Bulgarian language, the teachers could work to develop new ideas on using VEO.

The VEO App can be used for free for all teachers from the partner school on this project. The other interested professionals will use the paid version, which is absolutely not expensive.

### Schools vision for the future

Having worked on this project the Regional Directorate of education and the participating schools in the Haskovo Region will continue to apply and adapt the developed training modules to train and induct teachers to use VEO to improve their work.

Unfortunately, in Bulgaria the teacher development programmes to support NQTs and new teachers are only conducted under the management of universities and last very shortly. For teachers who wish to retrain to teach shortage subjects the state doesn't offer any appropriate programmes, but there is a great opportunity for the Regional Directorates of Education to help schools create their internal programmes for support of the new teachers in their first year using VEO and exchanging good practices. Thus the Regional Directorate should be active involved to promote VEO to university lecturers and universities in Bulgaria. The schools will support it by offering their experience with VEO App.

On the other hand, the project partner schools in Bulgaria are all determined to develop and improve their internal qualification plans and to maintain their professional relationships with other Erasmus+ Partner Schools to ensure this valuable collaboration is the vehicle for on-going sharing of practice as well on VEO platform.