

# Key findings from a final evaluation of Bulgaria's "Equal Access to School Education in Times of Crisis" project

## Key findings



### Relevance

Activities under the programme responded to clear needs and priorities within Bulgaria's school system, such as digital access and skills, and parental engagement, and were adapted in line with the evolving crisis.



### Effectiveness

Activities successfully increased access to digital devices in Bulgarian schools, but a focus on basic digital skills limited the impact on teaching and learning.



### Efficiency

Despite the cost of purchasing devices and delivering training, providing equal access to digital tools and skills provided considerable societal value in a context where equity is a major challenge.



### Coherence

Activities were cohesive, coordinated and aligned to national and European education and skills strategies.



### EU added value

The project provided impactful crisis response measures at a scale which would not have been feasible without REACT-EU funding.



### Sustainability

Stakeholders largely agreed that the activities improved the school system's preparedness for future crises; however, a more system-based approach could also have enhanced digital education for the longer term.

## Conditions enabling impact

- A good level of communication and transparency across levels ensured an adequate sense of fairness, clarity and support.
- An equity-centred approach empowered schools to reach students in need, helping reduce disparities in digital access.
- The ability to move devices between schools enhanced collective capacity.

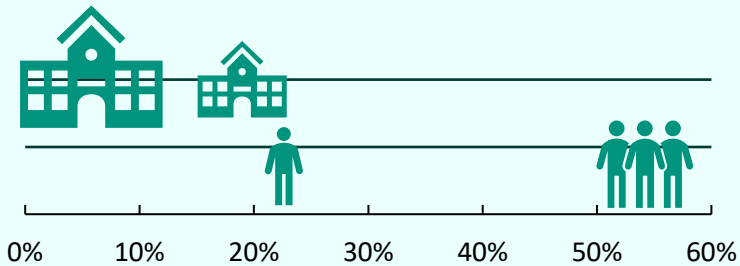
## Conditions limiting impact

- Data reporting and collection for project monitoring did not sufficiently contribute to better decision making.
- Parental outreach was not targeted enough to engage the most disadvantaged or disengaged.

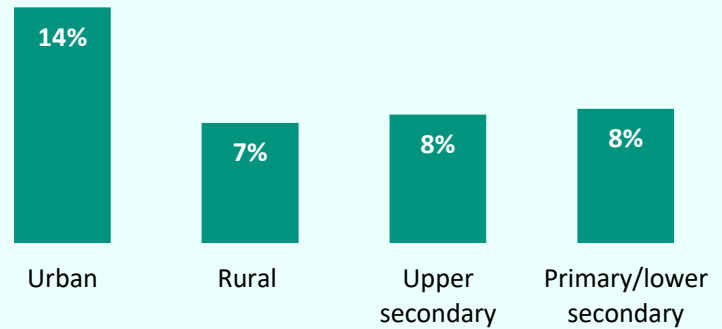
## Key data

### The project was highly relevant: improving equal access to digital devices and skills were key needs

More principals of small schools and those with high concentration of ethnic minorities reported a lack of digital devices before the project



Few students reported knowing where to find information to solve technical issues prior to the project

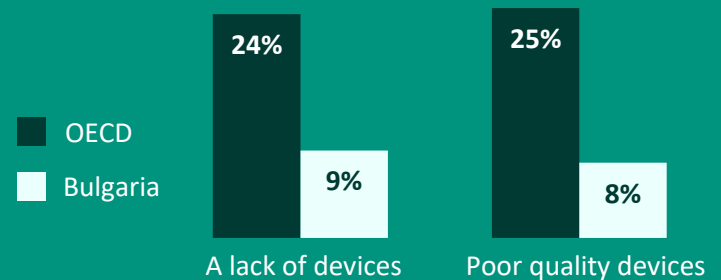


### The project successfully addressed gaps in access to digital devices within schools

Nearly all schools received devices through the project, based on their own identification of students' needs

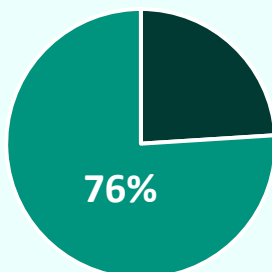
99%

By 2022, fewer principals in Bulgaria reported problems with digital access than on average across the OECD

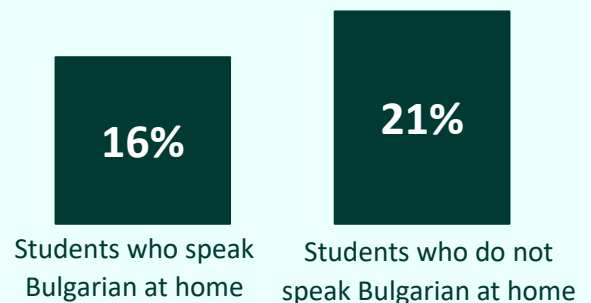


### Training improved many teachers' basic computer skills, but gaps remained in some students' capacity to learn via digital devices

Most principals reported that the training increased teachers' basic computer skills



But many students reported having trouble using digital devices for learning, even after receiving training



Almost all schools surveyed reported feeling better prepared to respond to future disruptions to in-person learning

90%

# Recommendations and suggested actions

- 1 Look beyond equitable access to digital technologies**, integrating measures that promote high quality digital education for all students to increase the potential impact on learning outcomes.
- 2 Pay more attention to developing advanced digital skills** among teachers (e.g. interactive pedagogies and digital assessment) and students (e.g. digital learning and production) through a broader training offer with scope for continued learning.
- 3 Strengthen efforts to engage parents in students' distance learning** by expanding the support offered by educational mediators and providing them with adequate training.
- 4 Employ a systems-based approach to digital education policy**, even in times of crisis, by addressing needs across the digital ecosystem, including governance; guidance and regulation; curricula, assessment and pedagogy; and human resources.
- 5 Better focus monitoring efforts on learning and improvement**, going beyond compliance requirements to help stakeholders identify ongoing needs and shared lessons for current and future digital education projects.

## Information about the project



This summary is based on findings published in OECD (2025), *Bulgaria's Equal Access to School Education in Times of Crisis Project: Final Evaluation*. The full report is available via the QR code below at <https://doi.org/10.1787/4ba2d868-en> or <https://sf.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=3823>.

The report is an output of the OECD's agreement to support the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme "Education" 2021-2027. Under this agreement, the OECD will conduct a series of interim and final evaluations of initiatives in five key thematic areas: 1) inclusive education, 2) integration of marginalised communities, 3) digitalisation and competency-based education, 4) vocational education and training, and 5) higher education.

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