



DRAFT PRESENTATION

“Equal access to school education in times of crisis”: Final Evaluation

OECD Support for the Evaluation of Bulgaria’s Programme “Education”

Cassie Hague, Analyst, OECD

Policy Advice and Implementation Division, OECD

Monitoring Committee

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Overview of the evaluation criteria

Relevance	Did the activities respond to clear needs and priorities, and target the most significant need related to equal access to school education in times of crisis?
Effectiveness	How successful was REACT-EU in achieving its objectives?
Outcomes and Impact	How effectively did the project achieve its goals and impact teaching and learning in Bulgaria?
Efficiency	How do the changes produced related to the resources used in the project?
Coherence	How well do the project activities align internally and with other education and skills policies, practices, activities and strategies in Bulgaria and Europe (externally)?
Sustainability and EU added-value	Will the effects last beyond implementation, and what might hinder sustainability? Did the project introduce changes that wouldn't have occurred without European intervention?



Evaluation methodology and data collection methods



A mixed methods approach, informed by a realist methodology



Mixed methods: desk research, review of national and international comparative evidence, fact-finding visit to Bulgaria in March 2024, ad hoc survey, interviews, focus groups, site visits



Quota sampling: (quantitative) capturing diversity in poverty, urbanisation, unemployment, educational outcomes and ethnic composition across six geographical regions in Bulgaria



Survey Respondents: Randomly selected schools within each district based on the proportion of the total number of schools in each region. Principals, teachers and students from different grades and ethnic diversity



Weighting: applied to demographic variables, such as age, gender, geography to balance representation across groups



Limitations: not fully representative results, as the sample was designed to focus on specific groups like ethnic minorities and regions. Participants were asked to recall events from 3-4 years ago, which may affect accuracy, but triangulating multiple data sources helped ensure reliable findings



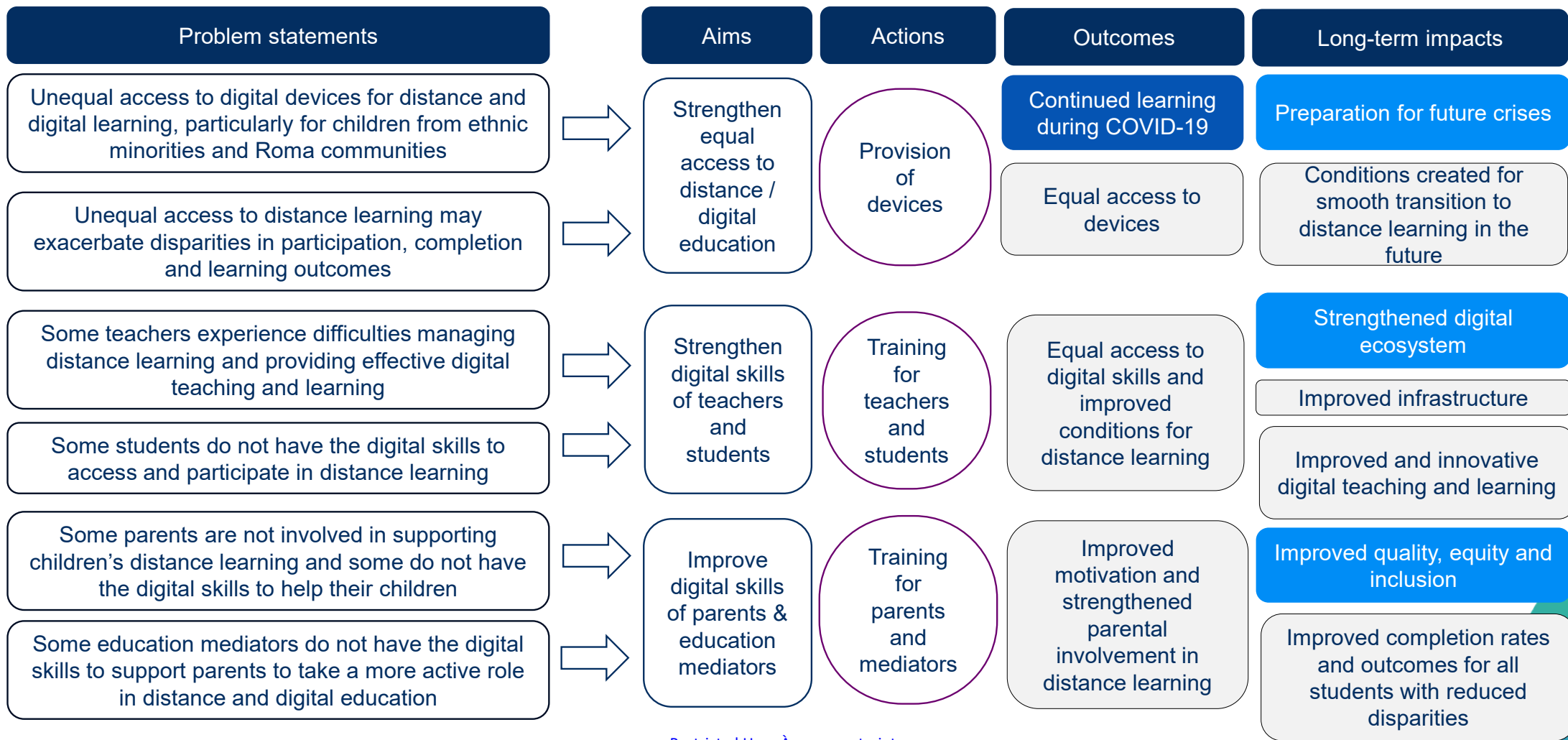
Sample for each district

Region	District	Total number of schools	School / principal quotas	Number of responses from schools / principals	Teacher quotas (x5)	Number of responses from teachers	Student quotas (x10)	Number of responses from students
Northwestern (Severozapaden)	Montana	59	12	23	60	117	120	222
North Central (Severozentralen)	Razgrad	56	11	14	55	45	110	66
Northeast (Severoztochen)	Varna	127	26	34	130	137	260	205
Southwestern (Yugozapaden)	Sofia city	287	58	57	290	189	580	149
South Central (Yuzhen tsentralen)	Pazardzhik	111	22	22	110	123	220	211
Southeastern (Yugoiztochen)	Sliven	68	14	28	70	137	140	257
Total		708	143	178	715	748	1430	1 110



A re-constructed logic model for the project





Summary of key findings





The project successfully met many of its objectives and helped to prepare the Bulgarian education system for future disruptions in the short and medium term

Equal access to
digital devices

Built basic digital
skills

Collaboration
and resource
sharing

Eased use of
digital platforms

Reduced risk of
increased
inequity

Efficiently
managed

Aligned with
other strategies

Positive
feedback from
stakeholders.



Some elements were less successful

Implemented at end of
distance learning

Very basic digital skills

Limited parental
engagement

Lack of sustainability
measures

Compliance-based
monitoring

Mismatch between
some objectives and
activities

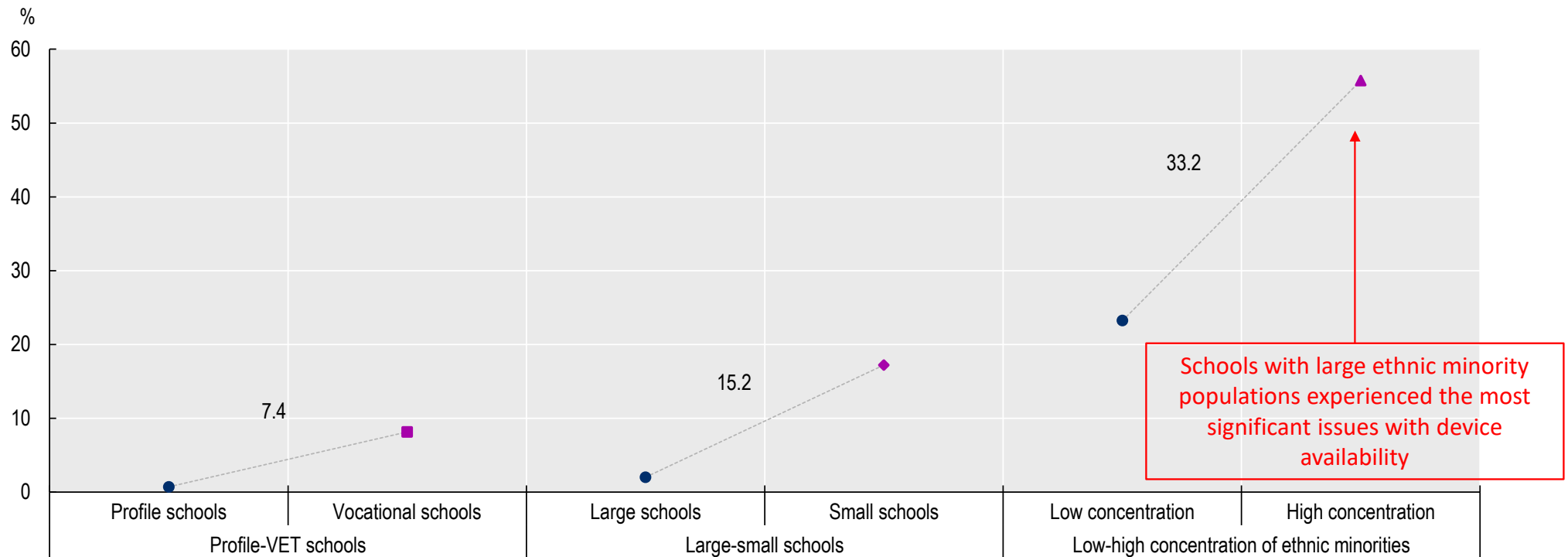
 **EDUCATION
& SKILLS**

Relevance





Relevance: Equal access was a key need – Schools reported unequal device availability for remote learning during the pandemic

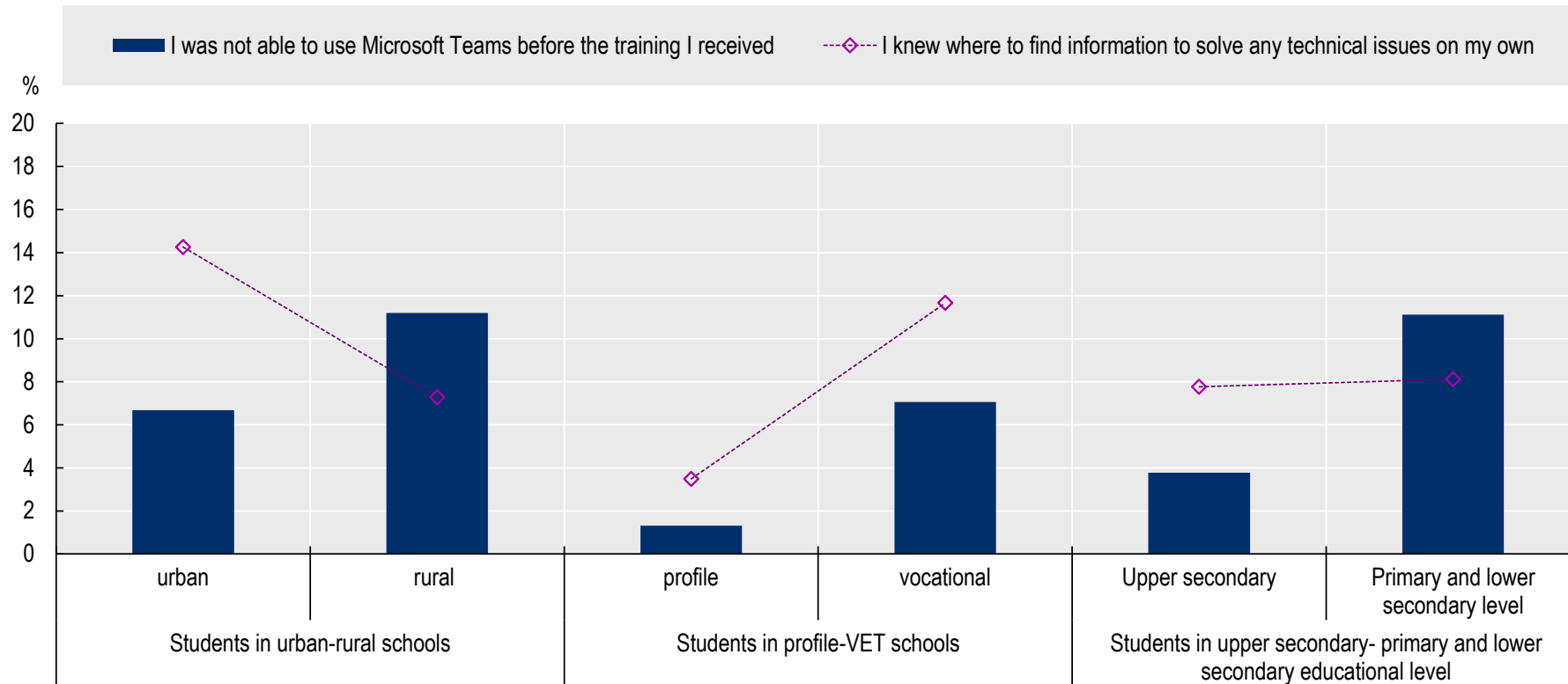


Percentage of principals reporting that their school's capacity to provide remote instruction was hindered by lack of devices for students

Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results



Relevance: Training on digital skills was a key need – students reported difficulties using video communication programmes before training, with differences among sub-groups

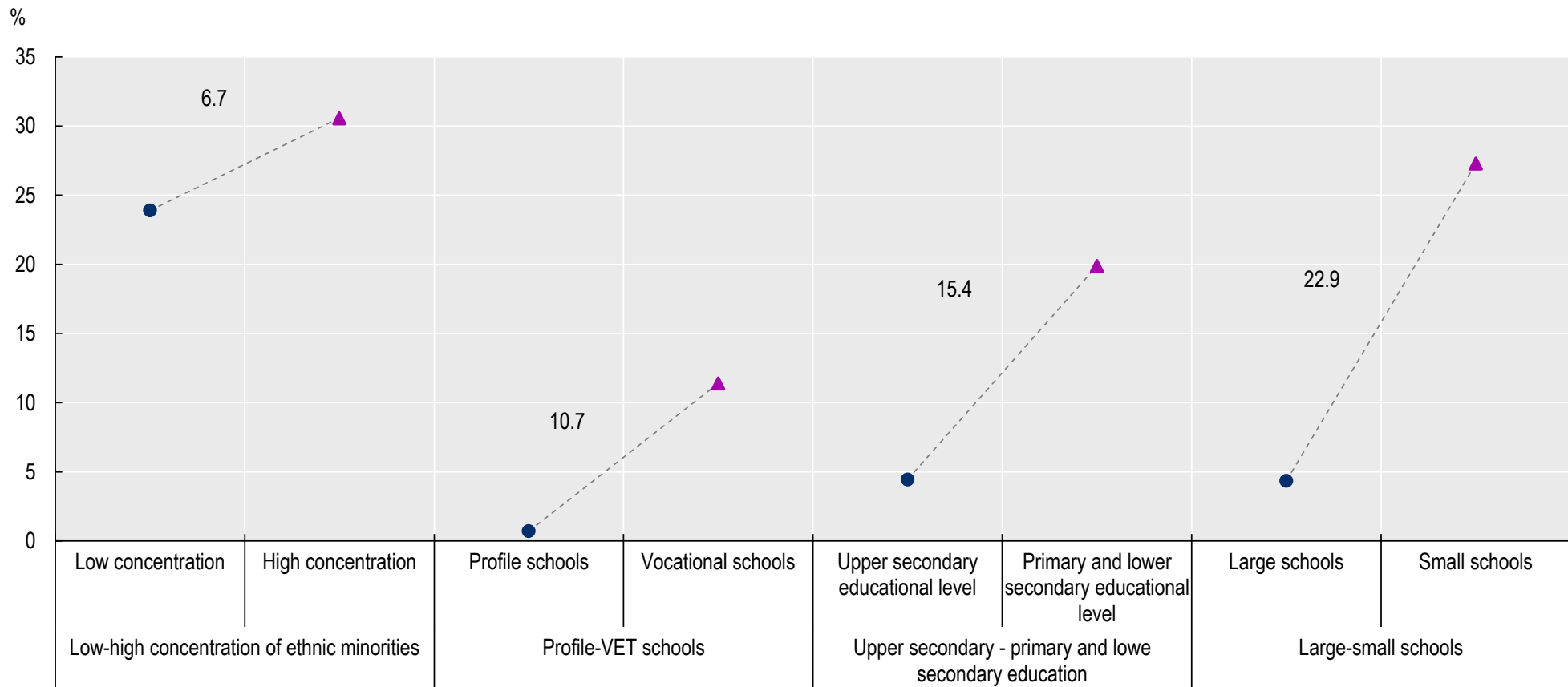


Percentage of students reporting not being able to use Microsoft Teams before the training

Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results



Relevance: The lack of digital skills for parents was unevenly distributed among parents



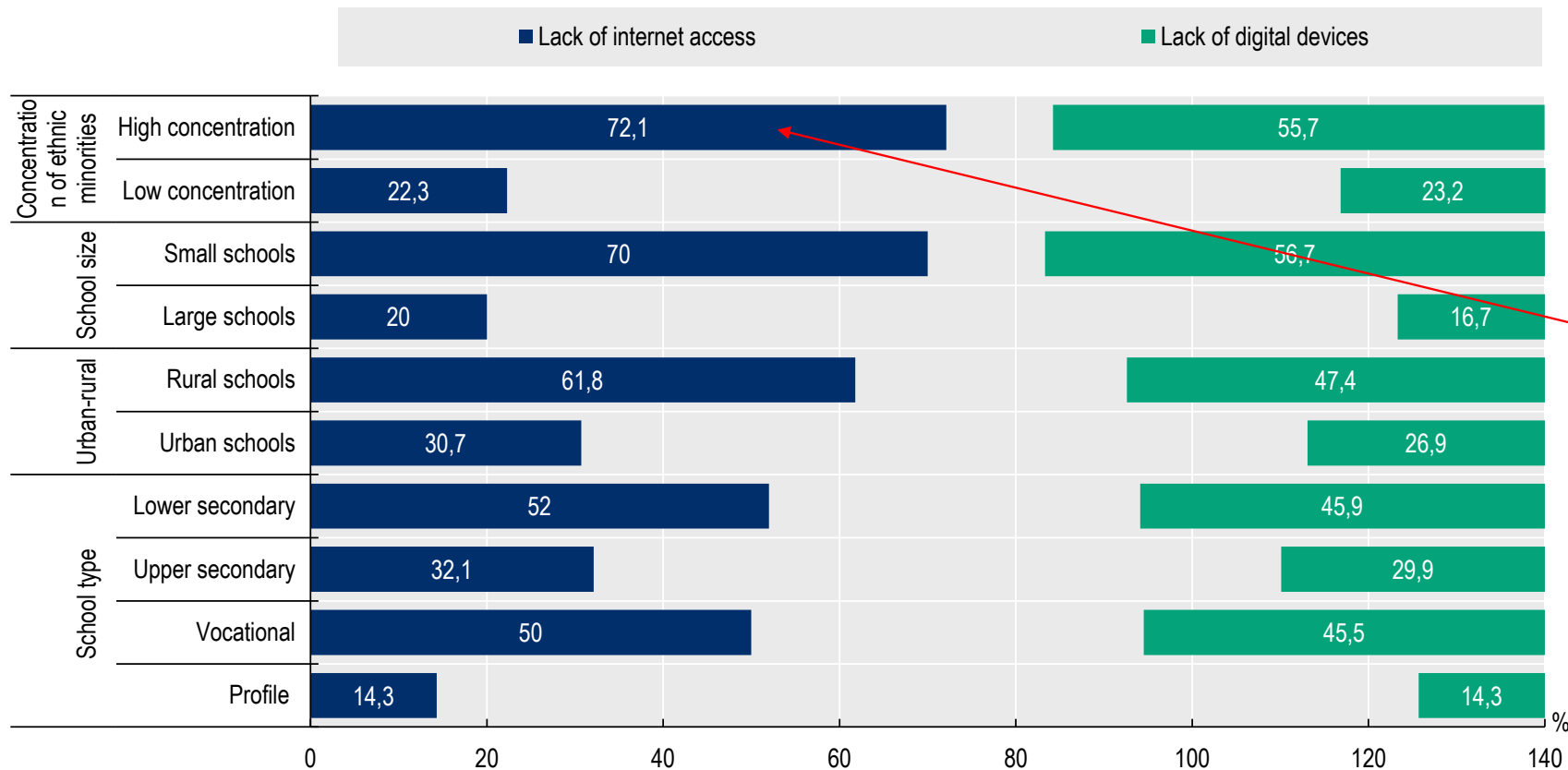
Percentage of principals reporting that their school's ability to provide instruction was hindered by parents' lack of digital skills for remote learning at the onset of the pandemic.

Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results

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Relevance: Internet access was a bigger issue than access to digital devices for students



Students in small, rural schools and with a high concentration of ethnic minorities (more than 70%) faced more connectivity and device availability issues than peers

Percentage of principals who reported that their school's capacity to provide remote instruction was hindered by lack of access to the Internet and lack of access to digital devices for students

Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results



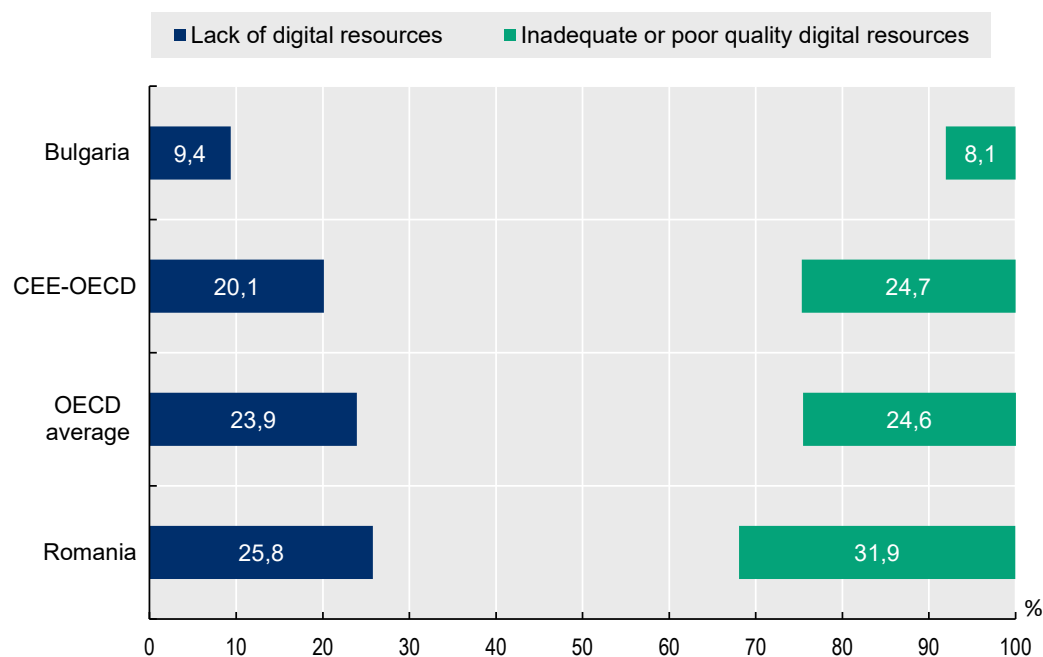
Effectiveness and impact



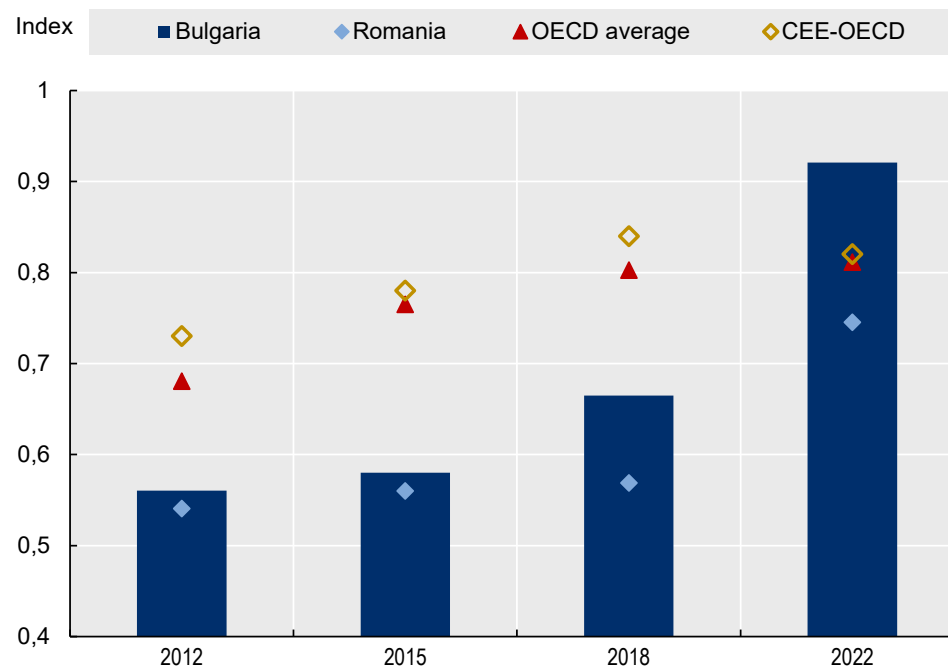


Effectiveness: Availability of digital resources increased substantially between 2018 and 2022 in Bulgaria, surpassing OECD countries on average

A. Availability of digital resources



B. Availability of computers



Source: Source: OECD (2023), PISA 2022 Results, Table II. B1.5.19, Table II. B1.5.20, Table II.B1.5.25



But improved distance education requires more than basic digital skills

This framework identifies **three crucial elements of teacher expertise for digital learning and teaching**:

1. **TECHNICAL** knowledge: selecting and using technology to support learning
2. **PEDAGOGICAL** knowledge: understanding and applying digital pedagogy
3. **CONTENT** knowledge: teaching specific subjects

Successfully integrating technology into teaching involves teachers **applying all three of these types of knowledge concurrently**. This requires:



GENERIC DIGITAL COMPETENCE: using technology



DIGITAL TEACHING COMPETENCE: facilitating student learning through technology, using digital assessments, etc.

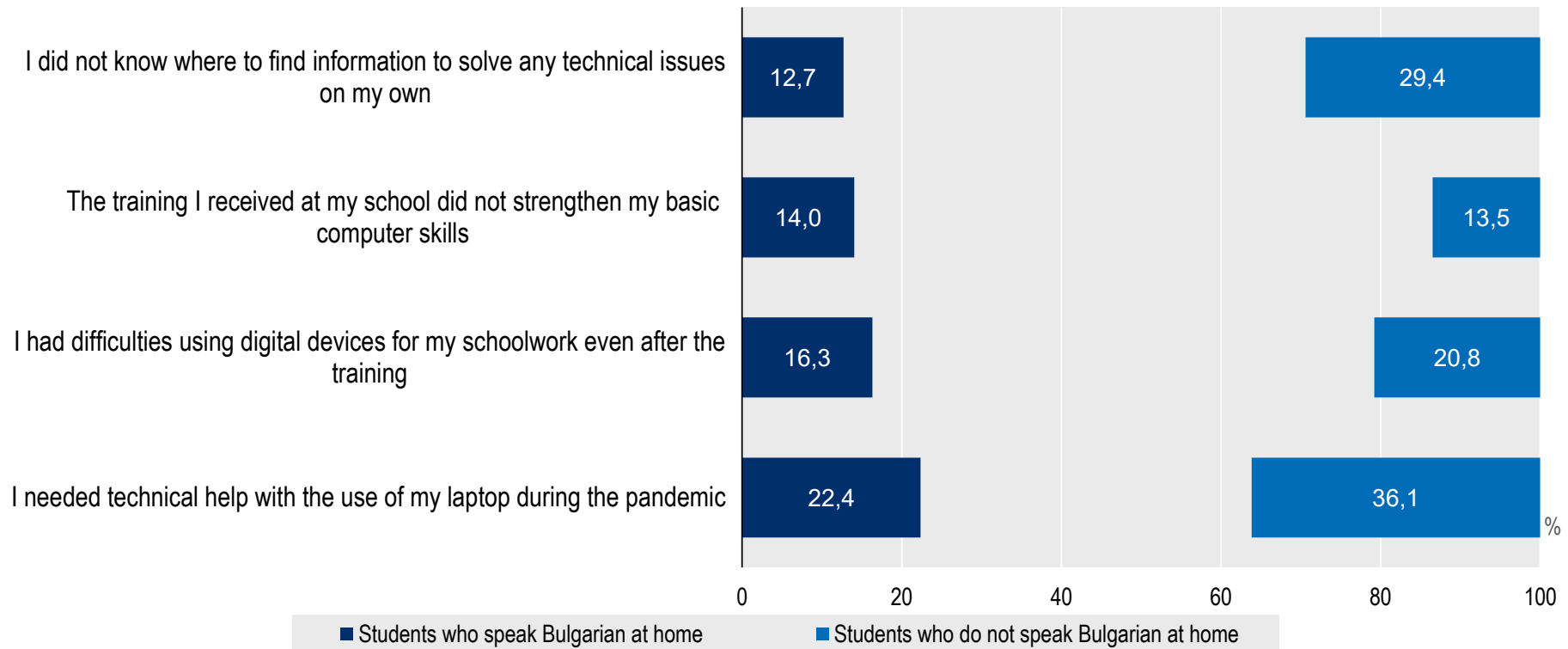


PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL COMPETENCE: managing and co-ordinating student learning and platforms

Source: OECD (2023), *OECD Digital Education Outlook 2023: Towards an Effective Digital Education Ecosystem*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c74f03de-en>.



Outcomes and Impact: Students who do not speak Bulgarian at home faced greater challenges with using digital devices both before and after training, compared to their peers

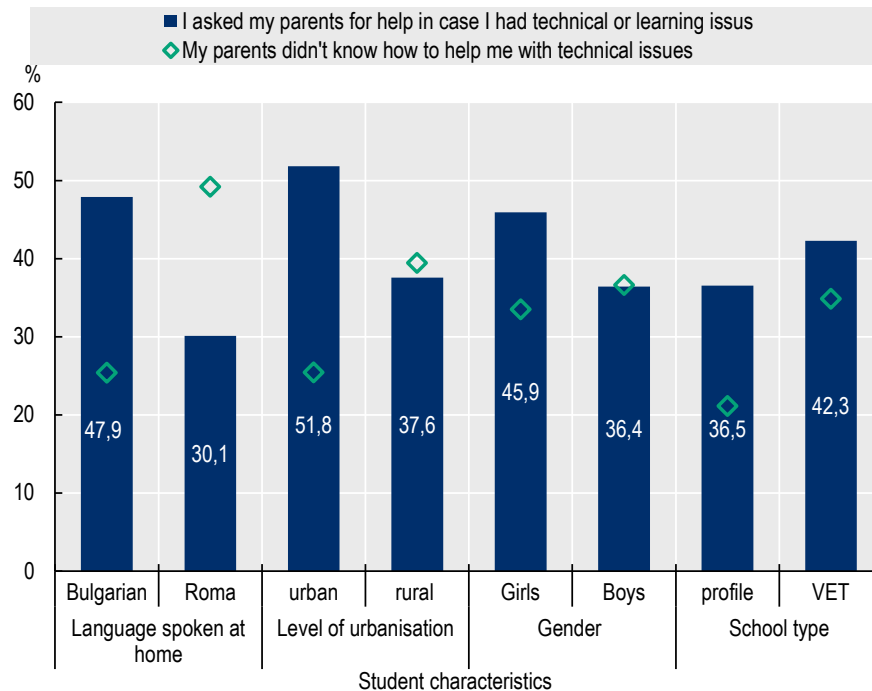


Students' responses in relation to guidance and training they received during the COVID-19 pandemic, by mother tongue
Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results

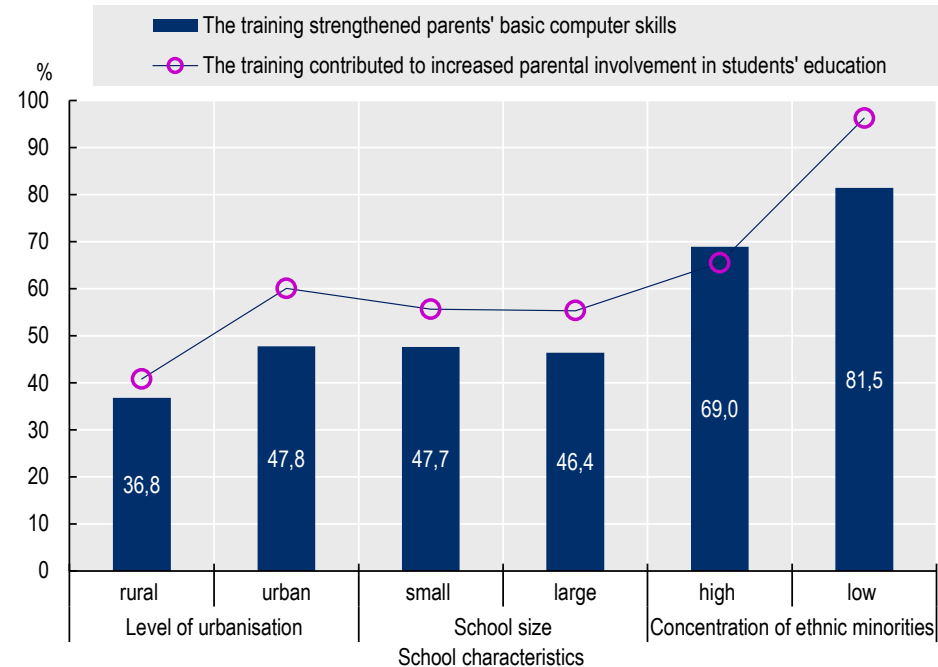


Outcomes and Impact: Many parents faced difficulties supporting their children during remote learning

A. Parental involvement as reported by students



B. Principals perceptions on parents' digital skills and involvement in students' education



Percentage of students who reported that their parents helped them in case they needed technical or learning issues, and that their parents did not know how to help them with technical issues

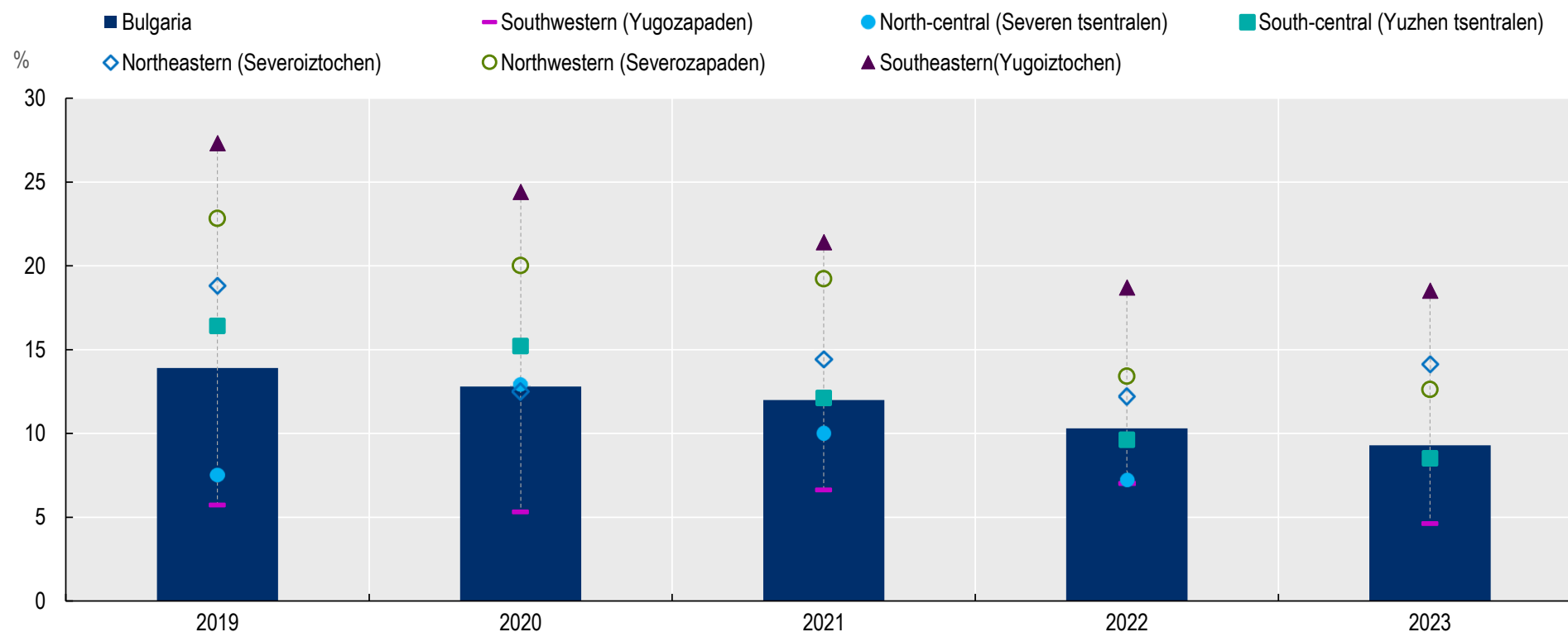
Percentage of principals reporting that the training strengthened teachers' basic computer skills and that it contributed to increased parental involvement in students' education

Source: OECD (2024), OECD Support for the Evaluation Plan of Bulgaria's Programme Education 2021-2027: Survey results

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Outcomes and Impact: Early school leavers have decreased in the years after the pandemic, but regional disparities remain and outcomes remain low



Source: Eurostat (2024), Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS2 regions, https://doi.org/10.2908/EDAT_LFSE_16



Promising practices





The project features a number of promising practices

- ✓ Increased **access** to digital devices
- ✓ Support for basic digital **skills**
- ✓ Mobilising **educational mediators** and providing training
- ✓ **Crises** preparedness, risk management and flexibility
- ✓ Moving towards greater teacher **collaboration** and a culture of **resource-sharing** between schools
- ✓ Putting equity issues at the **centre** of digitalisation
- ✓ A good level of **communication** and **transparency** between different levels of the education system



Lessons & Recommendations





Lessons & Recommendations

Ensuring basic access is only the first step towards equity

Recommendation 1: Future projects could **integrate measures to promote equitable outcomes, not just equitable access.**

Basic digital competences are not enough

Recommendation 2: Future projects could **go beyond basic digital skills and one-off training with attention to more advanced competencies, pedagogical approaches and ongoing skills development to support more effective digitalisation.**

Digital skills are not the biggest barriers preventing parental involvement

Recommendation 3: Future projects could take a **more comprehensive approach to enhancing parental engagement in digital and distance learning by expanding the role and support provided by educational mediators.**

A systems approach is crucial even in times of crises

Recommendation 4: Future projects, even in times of crisis, could benefit from taking a **more systems-based approach to digital education, one that not only addresses immediate needs but also builds long-term sustainability.**

Monitoring as a learning tool, not just a compliance exercise

Recommendation 5: In future projects, **monitoring could more clearly focus on learning and improvement, helping stakeholders identify ongoing needs and draw lessons to better support equity.**



Thank you!

