1. Legal Basis
Educational statistics is constructed 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. At the same time the main part of the methodology is formed by the methodological documents of Eurostat, which are connected with the preparation of the data and the filling in of the so called UOE annual education questionnaire (a joint questionnaire of UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat).

The basic legal and official acts in the Republic of Bulgaria which are directly implemented in the development of the methodology and organization of the current statistical surveys are: the Law on Statistics, the Pre-school and School Education Act, the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the Higher Education Act and the Law on the Development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The data on school education are not comparable to those for previous years, since 2017/2018 school year because of considerable changes in the educational system structure resulting from the Pre-school and School Education Act.

2. Main Statistical Surveys
The National Statistical Institute conducts yearly exhaustive surveys that characterize the activity of the educational institutions:
- Pre-primary education in kindergartens (educational level ISCED - 0);
- Primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education in all types of schools and vocational education after upper secondary education in vocational colleges (educational levels ISCED - 1, 2, 3 and 4);
- Vocational training against payment for attaining a professional qualification level according to the Law on Vocational Education and Training in vocational training centers (VTC), vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges, which covers individuals older than 16 years of age (educational levels ISCED - 2, 3 and 4). The statistical survey on VTC has been conducted jointly with the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training via information system, since 2012;
- Tertiary education for acquiring educational-qualification degrees ‘Professional Bachelor’, ‘Bachelor’ and ‘Master’ in colleges, universities and equivalent higher schools (educational level ISCED - 6 and 7). The statistical survey on tertiary education covers all authorized higher schools according to the Higher Education Act and the private spiritual higher schools, opened under the regulation of Law on Religion;
- Tertiary education for acquiring educational and scientific degree ‘Doctor’ in universities and scientific organizations (educational level ISCED - 8).

3. Main Statistical Units and their Breakdowns of Characteristics
3.1. Students enrolled (children in kindergartens, pupils, students, Ph.D. students)
3.1.1. Definition
A pupil/student is every person enrolled in an educational program of formal education according to ISCED irrespective of the mode of attendance. Formal education includes educational programmes implemented in legitimate educational institutions created according to the existing legal order. Ph.D. students in scientific organisations are also included, irrespective of their mode of attendance.

1 Prom. SG No. 79/13 October 2015.
NSI with its surveys is 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. According to the recommendations for filling in the UOE questionnaire, each country should make efforts to obtain the exact number of students enrolled, without counting twice those who are enrolled in two educational programmes simultaneously, i.e. annually the number of students enrolled should be obtained and not the number of enrolments.

3.1.2. Reference date

The reference dates of observation for the different surveys are selected in such a way so to reflect adequately the number of students. The period of 15 - 30 days after the beginning of the school year turned out to be most suitable because in this period the status for each student is finally settled.

For the different surveys, the observation dates are as follows:
- Pre-primary education - December 1;
- Basic and upper secondary education and vocational education after upper secondary education - October 1;
- Training for attainment a professional qualification level in vocational training centres, vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges - December 31;
- Tertiary education (Ph.D. excluded) - November 15;
- Ph.D. - December 31.

3.1.3. Main breakdowns of characteristics

The main breakdowns of characteristics for collecting data on enrolled students are: sex, year of birth, grade, repeating a grade, level of education, mode of attendance, type, profile and location of the school, profession/specialty studied, citizenship and country of prior education (for tertiary students and Ph.D. students), studying of foreign languages, studying of mother tongue (for basic and upper secondary education).

Students studying in vocational classes at general schools are presented as vocational education.

Foreign students are those students who are not citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria as well as those who have dual citizenship and have been enrolled under the regulations about foreign citizens.

The student mobility is measured by country of prior education which means that mobile student is a student who has graduated secondary education abroad.

3.1.4. Some particularities when distributing enrolled students by ISCED 2011 levels of education

- The students in preparatory grade before first grade in classes for hard-hearing children and visually handicapped children are classified at the starting stage of basic education or level ISCED - 1 (primary education), because the program is different from the one for kindergartens.
- Students in VIII grade, enrolled in general profiled and vocational programmes with admission after completed VII grade are classified as ISCED 3 level, until the school year 2016/2017 including, for as much as these are overall programmes aiming at acquiring upper secondary education and are entirely conducted in gymnasiums, art and sport schools or vocational gymnasiums.
- Until the school year 2016/2017 including, students in vocational schools (VS) and in independent vocational classes with enrolment after VI and VII grade are classified as ISCED 2 level according to ISCED 2011 and those studying in VS with enrolment after VIII grade are classified as level 3 according to the same classification.
3.1.5. Students who have left school are defined as students who were enrolled in the beginning of the previous school year but before its end due to some of the listed reasons had left the school. These students are observed by sex, grade groups and by reasons for leaving:

- With poor health;
- Students up to 16 years of age who moved to another school but without confirmation that they were enrolled;
- Left because of unwillingness to study, as a total number and of which persons over 16 years of age;
- Left because of family reasons;
- Left because of going abroad.

Those who have left school cannot be treated as dropouts from the educational system because they could continue their education during the next school year and those who were under 16 years of age are obliged to continue their education.

3.2. Newly enrolled pupils/students

3.2.1. Definition

Pupils/students who have been enrolled for the first time in the initial grade or course of the respective educational level are considered newly enrolled. This means that those which have been enrolled in the same educational level previous years are not included to the number of the newly enrolled.

3.2.2. Main breakdowns of characteristics

The main breakdowns of characteristics for collecting data on the newly enrolled students are: sex, year of birth, educational level, mode of attendance, type, profile and location of the school, profession/specialty taught, educational qualification degree (for tertiary education) and citizenship (for students in tertiary education and Ph.D. students).

3.3. Graduated level of education, who received a certificate or a diploma

3.3.1. Definition

Graduates are those pupils/students who received a document for a completed level from a legitimate education institution, containing all the necessary records and stamps according to the law.

According to the requirements of the UOE questionnaire, graduates are divided into two groups:

- graduates who have received for the first time a diploma for the relevant educational level;
- graduated in the last academic year, already holding a diploma for the same educational level obtained in previous periods.

At the present stage, NSI does not collect data separately for the two groups of graduates, but only for the total number, since the educational institutions themselves are not able to provide reliable data separately for the two groups.

3.3.2. Main breakdowns of characteristics

The main breakdowns of characteristics for collecting data on graduated students are: sex, year of birth, mode of attendance, type, profile and location of the school, profession/specialty taught, level of education attained (basic or upper secondary), level of professional qualification attained, educational qualification degree (for tertiary education) and citizenship (for students in tertiary education and Ph.D. students).

3.4. Teachers/Academic staff

3.4.1. Definition

The teachers (academic staff) are official persons who directly conduct the training sessions according to curriculum irrespective of whether they are full or part time employees. Directors and deputy directors in basic and upper secondary education are observed separately although a great part of them may have lecturing functions as well. The academic staff in tertiary education (ISCED - 6 and 7) includes persons whose main engagement is teaching and research
work. This staff includes the officials such as rectors, vice rectors, deans, heads of departments, etc. if they have teaching activity.

3.4.2. Main breakdowns of characteristics

The main breakdowns of characteristics for collecting data on teachers are: sex, age (5-year age groups), completed educational level, educational level for teaching, type and location of the school, type of employment - full or part time.

Teachers in basic and upper secondary education are grouped by levels of teaching and by programme orientation (general or vocational). In the cases when a teacher teaches in different levels, he/she is classified in the level where he/she has most school hours.

Teachers of vocational classes in general schools are presented in vocational education. Academic staff in higher schools is studied by sex, age, type of employment (full or part time), by scientific titles - professors, associate professors, assistants, senior lecturers, lecturers.

3.5. Management personnel

3.5.1. Definition

The management personnel includes official persons performing management functions at the level of the educational institution - principals, assistant principals, rectors, deans and their assistants, heads of departments.

3.5.2. Main breakdowns of characteristics are the same as those for teachers/academic staff.

4. Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are main data sources for enrolments, teaching staff and other personnel. Type of the educational institutions and their characteristics, defined by different criteria are part of the essential breakdowns of characteristics for the enrolments and the personnel.

4.1. Definition

An educational institution is defined as a centre taking independent decisions, which performs educational services for persons and organizations and is created according to the regulations of the law. This means that the institution has a manager (director, rector or another manager), i.e. this is an independent educational institution. Dependent educational institutions are branches or units known under other names which are typically subordinate to an independent institution.

Educational institutions are those, which directly perform training according to educational programs with students in organized classes (groups) at place or by a distant mode of attendance. Self-training persons and enterprises conducting qualification courses, language training and others do not come into the scope of the definition of educational institution.

4.2. Types of educational institutions and their main statistical characteristics.

4.2.1. Kindergartens

Main characteristics:

- Type of ownership (public and private)

4.2.2. Schools\(^2\) (I - XII grade)

Main characteristics

- Type: primary (I - IV grade), basic (I - VII grade), integrated (I – X grade), gymnasiums (VIII - XII grade), secondary (I - XII grade), vocational (art schools, sport schools, vocational gymnasiums providing training on programs for attainment of third and second level of professional qualification, including religious schools). Since 2011/2012 school year, with an amendment to the Law on Vocational Education and Training (State Gazette No. 50/2010), programmes in sport schools passed from general to vocational programmes providing training for attainment of III level professional qualification.

- Type of management: independent and dependent schools.

\(^2\) According to the Pre-school and School Education Act
4.2.3. Vocational colleges with enrolment after upper secondary education. 
Main characteristics: type of ownership (public and private).
4.2.4. Higher schools - colleges, universities and equivalent higher schools.
Main characteristics: type of ownership (public and private).

5. Specific Classifications Used
ISCED is designed to serve as a framework to classify educational activities as defined in programmes and the resulting qualifications into internationally agreed categories.
5.2. ‘Classification of the fields of education and training 2015’ published in State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016.
The classification was developed on the basis of UNESCO ‘ISCED Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F 2013)’ and the methodological document ‘Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F 2013) - Detailed field descriptions’. It is applied in the tertiary education statistics since 2017/2018 academic year.
5.3. Classification of the specialties for acquiring educational and scientific degree ‘Doctor’, complemented with the new doctoral programmes accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency since 2012.
This classification is used in Ph.D. statistics and is based on a Council of Ministers Decree, published in State Gazette, No. 34/1990. As the classification is not harmonized with the classifications mentioned from point 5.1 to point 5.3, a transition key is used for the purpose of ensuring internationally comparable data on Ph.D. students by fields of education. This key ensures the correspondence between the specialties from the Bulgarian classification and the detailed fields of education and training of the international classification (ISCED-F 2013). In the list are also included new doctoral programmes, accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, since 2012.
5.4. List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training approved by Order RD 09-413/12.05.2003 of the Minister of Education and Science, which is applied to statistics of vocational education in schools and VTC.

6. Reducing the Number of pupils/students and teachers/academic staff to a Full-time Equivalent
6.1. Definition of full and part time student/teacher
A student is considered full time if he/she is enrolled in a regular mode of attendance and part time if he/she is enrolled in another mode of attendance (extra-mural training, evening courses, distance or independent learning).
A teacher/academic staff member is considered full time employed if he/she works in an educational institution on a labour contract and has a full norm employment planned for the school year. If these conditions are not fulfilled, the teacher is considered part time employed. This last category includes also all part time teachers working on a second or civil contract.
6.2. Calculating the number of the pupils/students and teachers/academic staff into a full-time equivalent.
It is considered that the Full-time Equivalent (FTE) of a student in regular mode of attendance is equal to one FTE. The number of the part timers is reduced into FTE by dividing it by the so called converting factor which is equal to the ratio of the yearly length (in school hours) of the ‘regular’ program and the length of the extra-mural or other respective programme. Thus if the regular program is twice the length of the extra-mural program, the converting factor is K = 2. If the students in regular mode of attendance are 200 and those in extra-mural are 100 then the FTE = 200 + 100/K = 250.
The FTE for teachers is calculated in similar way, with the converting factor for the part timers being determined as a ratio of the number of hours of the teachers working on a labour contract and the average number of hours of the part timers. For tertiary education, FTE is
calculated separately for every scientific title (professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, assistants).

7. Scope of the Surveys
The statistical surveys cover enrolments, teaching and other staff in all legitimate educational institutions on the territory of the country including their branches.

8. Data Dissemination
Data from the statistical surveys on the pre-school, basic, upper secondary and tertiary education are disseminated by different means.

8.1. Statistical publications
NSI is publishing yearly the statistical publication ‘Education in the Republic of Bulgaria’. Beside this, education data are included in the general publications of the NSI - Statistical Yearbook, Statistical Reference Book, Regions, districts and municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria.

8.2. Internet
The data in the NSI website and the Information system ‘Infostat’ are updated yearly.

8.3. Data users
Data are being provided to:
- Other statistical bodies;
- National and foreign users;