The Textbook Approval Procedures in Bulgaria

Prosveta Publishing House JSC
The System in Bulgaria

• The new Law on Pre-school and School Education came into force in October 2015.

• It serves as a legal basis for the reform of the educational system which has fallen down on us with all its might. Everything happened really very fast and in a scale that was almost unfeasible.

• The positive impact of this law was the liberalisation of the textbook market. The difficulties came from the law provisions according to which a new curricula came into force in 2017/2018 academic year for students in grades 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8. The curricula for the next three grades 3, 7, and 9 will come into force in September 2018.
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• To sum it up, we had to develop and submit for approval, print and deliver to schools textbooks for eight grades in less than two years. For Prosveta it meant 196 projects. The textbooks for grades 1 – 4 are accompanied by workbooks which are also subject to approval.

• 123 of our textbooks have already been approved and in circulation in the school system since September 2017. In March, we submitted the next 73 projects that have to be in the schools by the beginning of this academic year.
The System in Bulgaria

• And because it is never too much for the ministry officials, they announced a call for approval of books for the four pre-school groups. The first portion – for years 5 - 6 and 6 - 7 has already been approved and the books for the next two groups have to be submitted to the Ministry in December 2018.

• Another call for approval was announced in January for grades 4th and 10th.
Who Pays for the Books?

- Expenses for the textbooks for the two upper pre-school groups in the kindergarten and for grades 1 – 7 are covered by the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria.

- The books for the two lower pre-school groups as well as the textbooks for secondary and upper secondary school (grades 8 – 12) are paid by parents.
The Approval System

All printed textbooks and their digital versions are subjected to approval. There are two stages of textbook approval.

• The first stage is Compliance with the curriculum
  ✓ Check of the documentation – copyright agreements with authors, designers etc.
  ✓ Appointment of a committee of 13 experts
  ✓ Evaluation for compliance with the corresponding curriculum
  ✓ Resolution by the committee – “Propose for approval” or “Do not propose for approval”.

• The second stage is Applicability of the book
  ✓ The Ministry announces the list of schools that will take part in the evaluation procedure (usually around 2000)
  ✓ Evaluation is carried out by the teachers teaching the corresponding subject
  ✓ Publishers print sample copies and deliver them to all schools at their expense.
  ✓ Textbooks that gather more than 50% “Applicable” are approved by the Minister.
The Main Challenges

- Liberalisation of the textbook market (A limitation of 3 textbooks per subject per grade existed in the repealed legislation.)
- New players appeared on the textbook market
- Extremely short terms for development of the new projects
The Main Goals

• To develop textbooks with very good quality targeted at different teachers and students

• To launch for the first time three brands of Prosveta Publishing Group (one of them new) – Prosveta – the tradition, Prosveta Plus – the ambition and Prosveta Azbuki – the proved success

• To preserve our share on both the subsidised and free market.
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

- **Selection of qualified experts**
  - The most important requirement in order to succeed in such conditions is to have competent and devoted to their work full-time employees.
  - Wise selection of knowledgeable authors that can write in a clear and concise way for kids with a good balance between university lecturers and teachers within the authors teams.
  - Selection of talented, creative and responsible graphical designers and illustrators who can work in such short terms.
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

• Motivation

✔ When you work in such extreme conditions, your team has to be extremely motivated because for quite a long period this is 24/7 work.

✔ In order to make a good team, you have to take into account a lot of specifics, both professional and personal. This is not a mechanical work, very often you have to act as a matchmaker to create the right team of authors, editors, designers and illustrators.
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

• **Accountability**

✓ Every member of the team has to have his/her specific assignment and be responsible for its accomplishment in time.

✓ Project managers are responsible for .
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

• **Accountability**
  
✓ The most important requirement in order to succeed in such conditions is to have competent, well motivated and devoted to its work full-time employees who work as a team.

✓ Wise selection of knowledgeable authors that can write in a clear and concise way for kids with a good balance between the university lecturers and teachers within the authors teams.

✓ Selection of talented, creative and responsible graphical designers and illustrators who can work in such short terms.
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

• **Reasoning**

✔ Behind all the efforts of the employees, there should be managers that are able to think, understand, make logical judgements and find right answers to all problems.

✔ This creates sense of stability and confidence in the staff, which leads to good results because they know that every problem could be solved.
Some S.M.A.R.T. Tips

- **Target**

  ✓ There is a big paradox: the textbooks are for the kids but the teachers are the ones who choose them. We have to keep this in mind all the time when we develop new textbooks.

  ✓ We try to meet the expectations of different teachers – conservative teachers, teachers that are eager to use new methodological and technical approaches.

  ✓ We try to use in our textbooks a concise language so that students can understand easily the explanations of terms, processes, phenomena etc.
Good practices

• We use one company for the design and illustrations of our Prosveta Plus brand for the 3rd grade and it turned out to be a very successful approach.

• We try to use the same authors for consecutive grades so that their names become familiar to teachers.

• Our company is certified under ISO and we can carry out trainings so that teachers can get credits that are crucial for their carrier development according to the new legislation. We organise short courses of 16 hours to cover a specific topic.
Thank you very much for your attention!