

# Bulgaria's future: focus on education

18.01.2012

*Valentina Nikolova  
Institutional Partnerships director at  
Teach for Bulgaria*



# Bulgaria consistently ranks at the bottom in Europe in terms of educational outcomes

✓ Consistently Bulgarian 15-year-olds lag markedly behind their peers worldwide in terms of math skills and functional literacy as measured by studies such as **PISA**

✓ Recently, Bulgaria came first in the EU with **21.8%** of its young people being *unemployed, not well educated and not currently in the process of receiving any qualification* – i.e. people with little employment prospects – European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions

(<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2011/72/en/1/EF1172EN.pdf>)

# Estimated cost of the 'prospectless' young people

Total resource cost includes estimates of the loss to the economy, losses arising from welfare benefits to the individual and the family, as well as the impact in terms of the resources or opportunity costs to the rest of society (employee and self-employment income, non-cash employee benefits, goods produced by own consumption, pensions from private plans, etc) = **€0.928\* bn**

**Cost as share of GDP (%) = 2.6 (highest in the EU)**

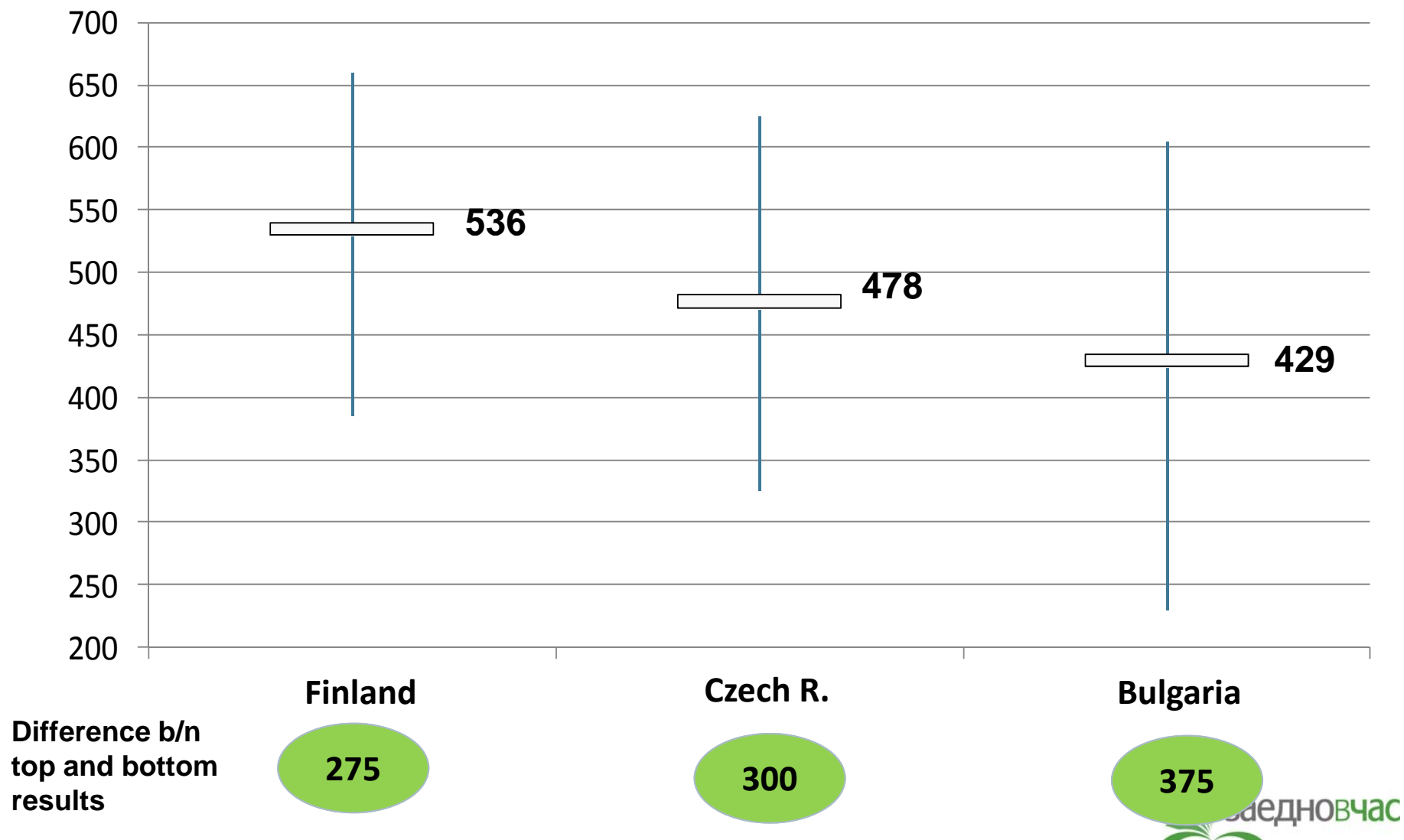
\*European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions

## Government implications...

- Bulgarian government accused of **stalling educational reform**
- Comprehensive **revamp of the “School law”** under way – should be in parliament by the fall of 2012 – doubtful quality and scope of the reforms included; ineffective policy making process; variety of vested interests; lack of capacity – both administrative and critical thinking;
- **Reforms planned** (for eg. full-day school in the lower grades) **will need large investments** - unclear how the financing will be secured
- Doubtful **political will** as we are nearing next elections – large scale reforms would threaten relationships with unions and societal support (2007 mass protests)

# PISA: a widening gap

## Distribution of results

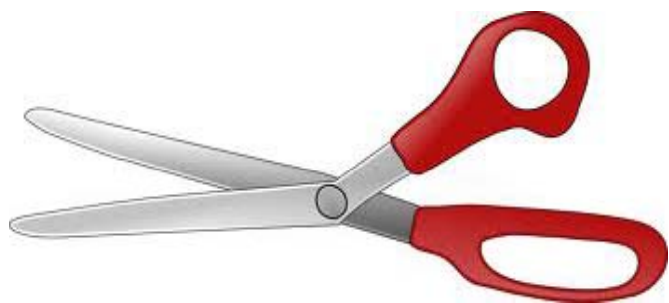


Yet, a paradox...



**Massachusetts  
Institute of  
Technology**

## The 'scissors effect'...

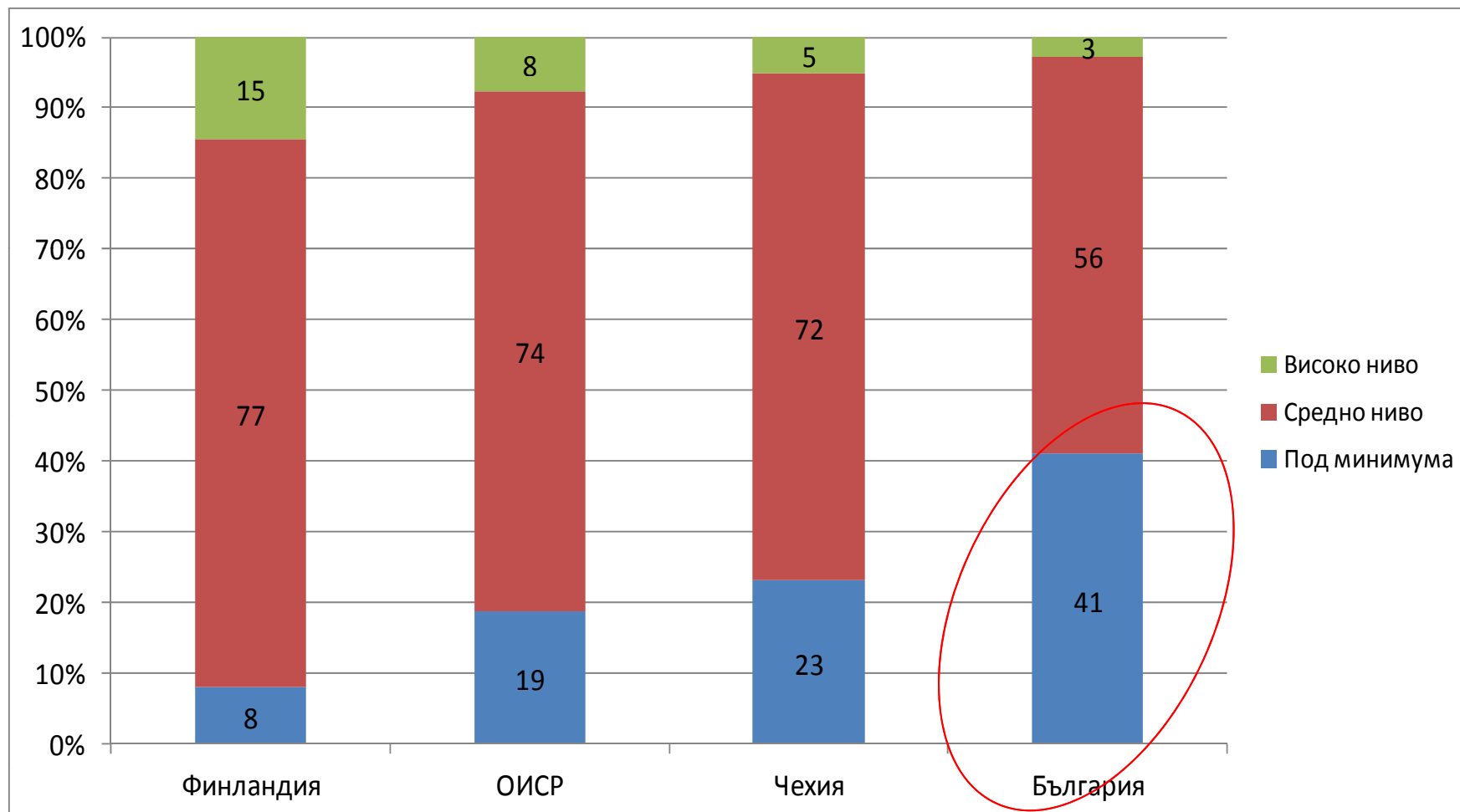


**OECD**



**Bulgaria**

# 41% of Bulgarian students below sanitary minimum of functional literacy



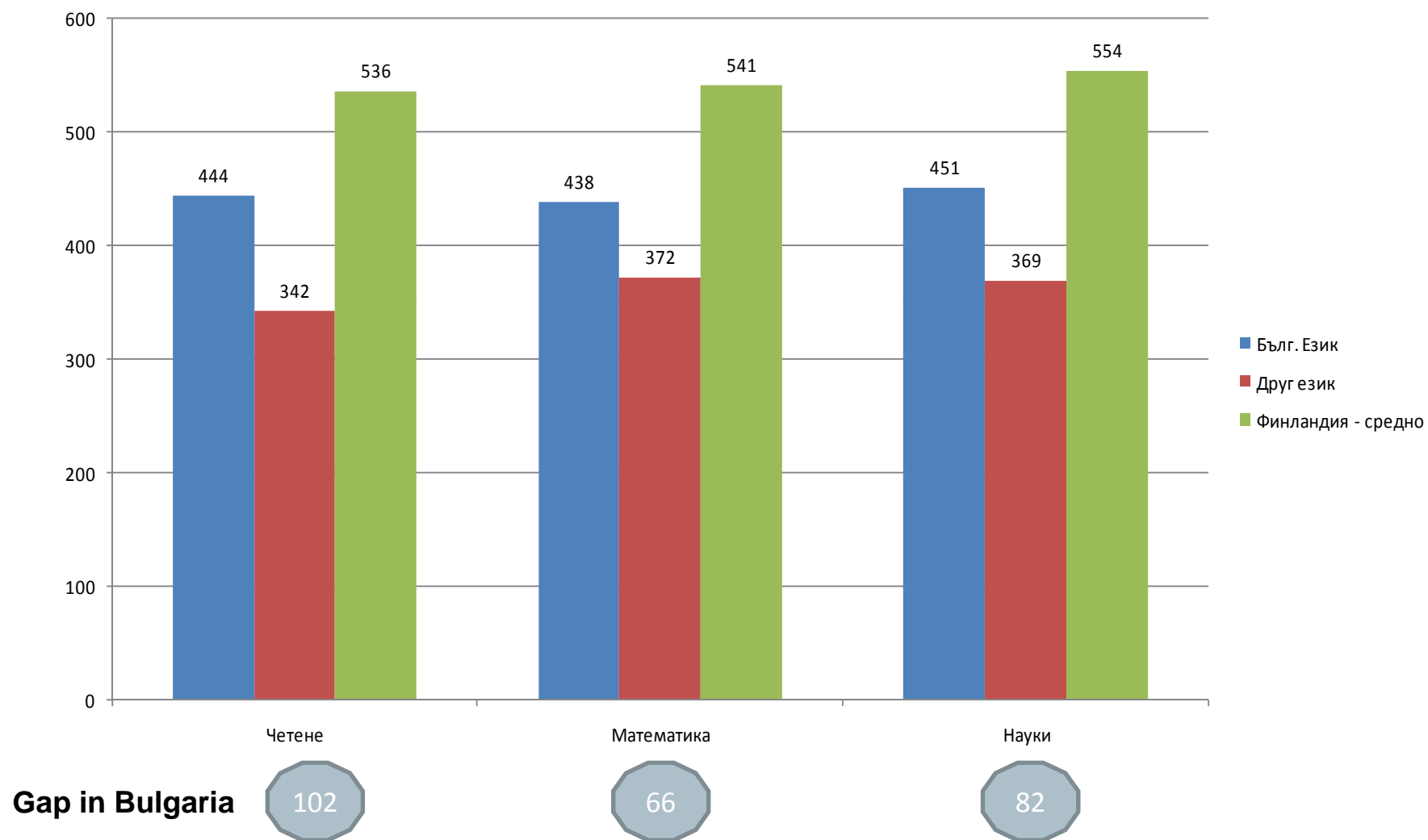


# Children left behind: what determines your life trajectory?

- **Gender**
- **Parents' education and profession**
- **Language spoken at home**
- **Family structure**
- **School location**
- **Type of School**

Unlike in most successful educational systems in the world, in BG it does matter which school you attend. Even more, which class within that school you are assigned to.

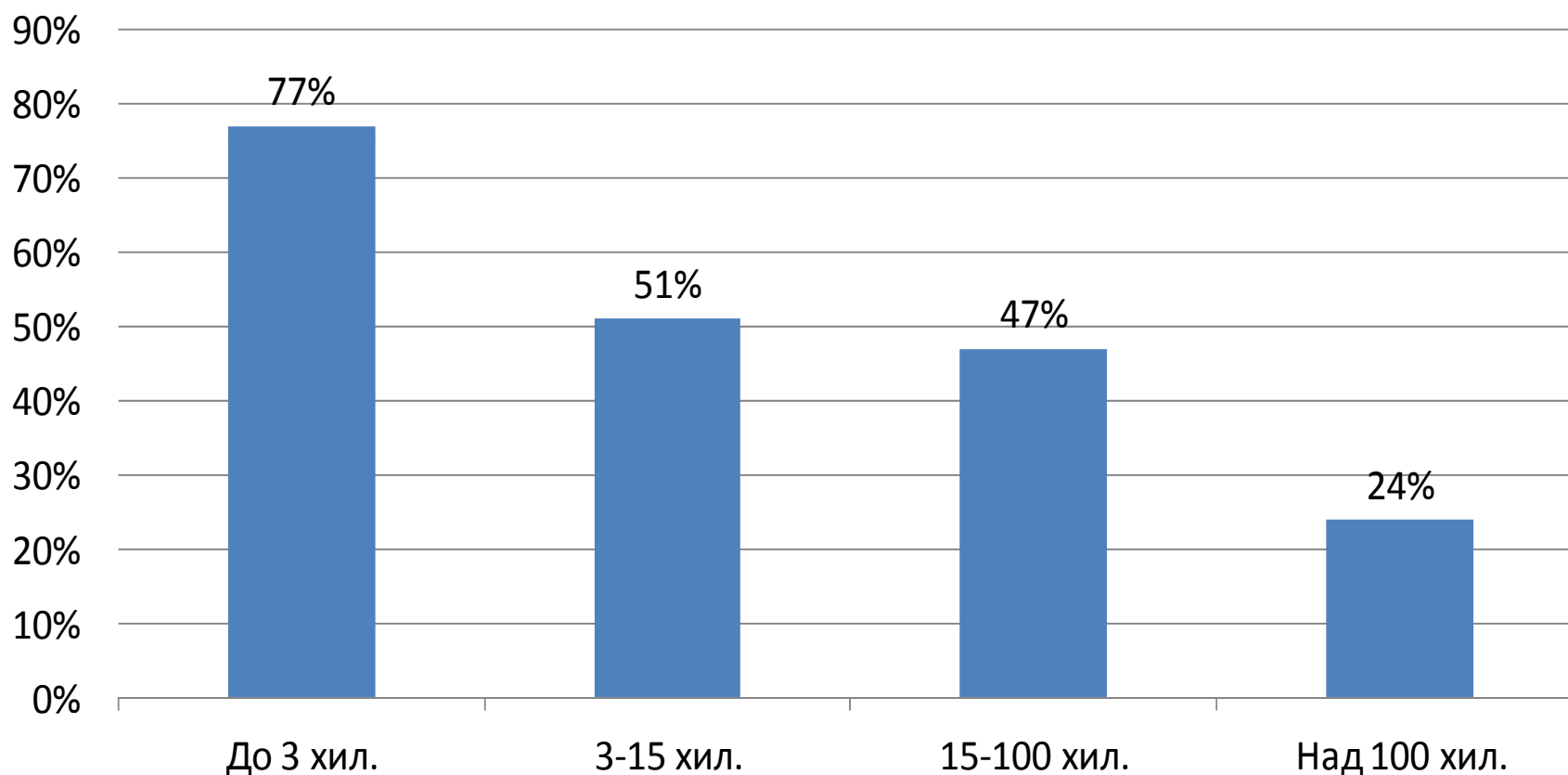
# How important is your mother tongue – a lot..



# Size (of the City/ Town where the school is) matters

% of students with achievements under the critical minimum

## Дял на ученици с постижение под критичния минимум



# Houston, we have a problem!

**Our students are below the OECD average**

**+**

**Very high proportion of students perform below the baseline**

**+**

**Big gap between highest and lowest results**

**+**

**Small percentage of students with the highest level of results**

**+**

**Significant difference based on type of schools**

# If you could push one lever alone, what would it be?

**Which of the following factors has the greatest effect on student results?**

A) School budget

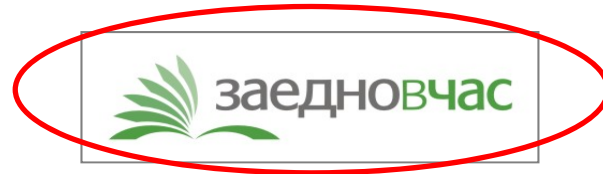
Б) School leadership and administration

B) National standards and programs

Г) Textbooks and available technology

**Д) The expectations and actions of the teacher**

# The Teach for All network invests in the most important factor for student success – teacher quality



+ Austria, Colombia, Mexico and New Zealand

# What does Teach for Bulgaria do?

Select most talented young people

- We select the top performers of the best BG and foreign schools
- Consistent selectivity of 10%
- Comprehensive competency model that is predictive of teacher success



Train them

- Train teachers based on the Teaching as Leadership model
- In partnership with Sofia University



Place them in most needy schools

- Our teachers become full time regular teachers in 5 – 12 grade
- 2011 school year started with 21 teachers in 4 regions of BG



Support them for 2 years

- We support them and continue their professional development throughout the 2 years of the program
- They are assigned:
  - TFB coordinator
  - Business mentor
  - School mentor



## Looking forward

- **TFB will continue its efforts to provide the best teachers to the most needy students with a moderately aggressive increase of scope – doubling of cohort for 2012**
- **TFB likely to take lead in quality analysis in BG in the area of education**
- **Currently developing a study that aims to more precisely define ‘the gap’, its economic cost and the highest impact models to address this gap**
- **We are welcoming opportunities to cooperate with interested parties, including foreign leading NGOs and research agencies, embassies in Bulgaria and businesses**