



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

SLOVAKIA



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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policy in 2015-17**

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Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

Over recent years, Slovakia has experienced skill mismatches in technical skilled professions as a result of brain drain as well as training too many students in social sciences and not enough in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (European Commission, 2015, p.7). However, the proportion of upper secondary education students in vocational education and training (VET) was high (69 % in 2015 compared to the EU average of 47 %) ⁽¹⁾. The employment rate of recent VET graduates was also above the EU average (73.5% in 2015, compared to 73%) (European Commission, 2016, p.8). Participation of adults in lifelong learning was among the lowest in the EU at 3.1% in 2014 and 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p.121) as shown in the framework data below (Table 1).

Challenges included increasing adult learning and improving educational outcomes, especially among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Making VET more labour market relevant, a teaching career more attractive, and improving teaching quality, were considered key pillars of an effective strategy.

Introducing dual VET (apprenticeship-type scheme) with practical training in companies was among the recommendations of a 2012 report on the status of education and schooling. Introducing apprenticeships and reinforcing work-based learning were also among the recommendations that Slovakia received in 2012 and 2014 in the framework of the EU's economic policy coordination.

Since the adoption of the first ever act on VET ⁽²⁾ manifesto, employers' organisations had been collaborating more closely with the government on VET policy-making. International collaboration in dual VET has been mainly supported through ESF projects and bilateral collaborations with Austria, Germany, and Switzerland ⁽³⁾. A major ESF project, *Development of secondary VET*, was implemented in 2013-15. Its aims included:

- (a) introducing dual system elements;
- (b) assessing the quality of teaching and training materials in VET;

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015. Most IVET learners in the country were in four-year (rarely five-year) programmes (ISCED 354) that award *maturita* school-leaving certificates and allow progression to higher education.

⁽²⁾ Act 184/2009.

⁽³⁾ 2012 Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in VET.

- (c) piloting work-based learning programmes;
- (d) developing vocational career guidance;
- (e) designing and implementing a method for analysing graduate employability.

Slovakia joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) in 2014.

The 2013 research and innovation strategy for 2014-20 stressed that all learners, including those in general education, need to acquire labour market relevant skills. Tax incentives for entrepreneurs were deemed to be needed to stimulate cooperation with VET schools; the strategy also called for changes in curricula to support entrepreneurship and workplace visits to make technical programmes and science more attractive to learners.

Against this background, Slovakia adopted a new Act on VET in March 2015. Its main objectives were to introduce a dual VET scheme and tax incentives for enterprises to provide training. The reform entered into force in September 2015, a major development within the reporting period. Based on initial experience, it is already undergoing readjustment.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in Slovakia and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	SK f	EU f	Yr	SK f	EU f	Range	SK	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	69.0 b	48.0 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 0.9	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	8.0 b	34.0 ^b _{E2}	'13-'14	▪ 1.0	▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	78.5	69.2E3	'13-'14	▪ -1.1	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	44.0	38.0 e	'10	44.0	38.0 e			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	21.0	20.0 e	'10	21.0	20.0 e			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	3.1 b	10.7 b	'13-'15	→ 0.0	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	69.0	66.0 e	'10	69.0	66.0 e			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	63.0 b	42.7 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 0.7	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	28.0	25.0 e	'10	28.0	25.0 e			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	30.2 b	33.0 b	'14-'15	▪ -1.7	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)		5.3	'15	1.4 b	6.9	'11-'15	↘ -0.1	↗ 0.5
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	^b _u 4.3	^b _C			
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	1.0 ^b _u	9.5 b			
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	9.7 B	9.5 ^e _B	'11	9.7	9.5 e			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	90.5 B	80.2 ^e _B	'11	90.5	80.2 e			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.69 b	0.56 ^b _{E4}			
IVET public expenditure per student (1000 PPS units)			'13	4.7 b	6.4 ^b _{E5}			
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.9	0.8 e	'10	0.9	0.8 e			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.6 b	1.0 ^b _{E6}	'13-'14	▪ -0.1	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	29.2 b	30.0 ^b _{E7}	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	2.6	9.3 E8	'13-'14	▪ 0.4	▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	61.3	41.5E9	'12	43.3	41.6E9	'10-'12	▪ -9.0	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)			'15	76.7 b	77.2 b	'14-'15	▪ 2.9	▪ 0.3

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	SK	f EU	f	SK	f EU	Range	SK	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	4.5 b	5.3 b	'14-'15	▪ 0.7	▪ -1.0
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	40.3 b	23.7 b	'14-'15	▪ -4.6	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	80.2	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	52.3	55.2	'15	59.9	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 1.5	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	6.9 b	11.0 C	'11-'15	↗ 0.5	↘ -0.6
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	28.4 b	38.7 C	'11-'15	↗ 1.4	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18-24 year-olds (%)		16.6	'15	17.2 b	15.8	'11-'15	↘ -0.4	↘ -0.3
Unemployment rate for 20-34 year-olds (%)		13.1	'15	14.5 b	12.9	'11-'15	↘ -0.8	↘ -0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)		77.4	'15	75.2 b	76.9 C	'11-'15	↗ 1.4	→ 0.0
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	8.6 b	23.5 C	'11-'15	→ 0.0	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	67.7 b	70.0	'11-'15	↗ 0.6	↗ 0.4
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)		53.4	'15	33.2 b	52.6 C	'11-'15	↗ 0.9	↘ -0.1
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	96.8 D	82.8 D			

(A) UOE back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED 2011 not yet available.

(B) AES 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

(C) 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

(D) Forecast made in 2016.

(E1) Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

(E2) Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

(E3) Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

(E4) Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

(E5) Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

(E6) Partial information for NL. (E7) Based on 25 countries (missing: IT, HR, UK).

(E8) Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, CY, FR, IE, UK).

(E9) Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

(b) Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

(u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p.125.

CHAPTER 1.

MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country attaches high priority to this Riga deliverable in the period up to 2020 ⁽⁴⁾. Work within this area is threefold:

- (a) adjusting an existing legislative framework for VET through cooperation with all national level stakeholders; this includes redesigning curricula;
- (b) implementing dual VET, adapting the 2015 legislation as necessary, and organising peer-learning activities and information campaigns;
- (c) raising the number of companies and VET students in dual schemes through incentives: tax deduction and bonus for employers, scholarships, remuneration for productive work, and material support from employers for students.

1.2. Main actions in 2015-17

1.2.1. Introducing dual VET

Following the 2015 Act on VET ⁽⁵⁾, upper secondary VET is offered as:

- (a) school-based programmes with practical training (mainly) in school workshops;
- (b) mixed scheme with school-based learning and training in companies within the framework of school-company agreements (contracts) based on previous legislation;
- (c) dual VET combining in-company and school-based learning, where learners (or their parents) have contracts with enterprises for training, while companies and schools have agreements for VET theory provision. Unlike some other countries, in the companies, learners have student and not employee status.

⁽⁴⁾ According to a Cedefop survey carried out among Director Generals for VET in the EU-28+.

⁽⁵⁾ Zákon č. 61/2015 Z. z. z 12. marca 2015 o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov [Act No 61/2015 Coll. of 12 March 2015 on vocational education and training and on the amendment to some other acts]. <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/8264.pdf>

Although no future job contract is explicitly envisaged by law, agreement on employment in the company, or at least in the sector, is expected ⁽⁶⁾.

Dual VET is mainly offered at ISCED levels 353 and 354, the latter granting higher education access. This is expected to help make VET more attractive ⁽⁷⁾. While enrolment in dual VET has doubled in its second year, the overall share is still less than 3% of all learners starting upper secondary level. Few are female, which may be partly because the sectors that offer this scheme, like mechanical or electrical engineering, tend to be more popular among males.

1.2.2. Active involvement of employers

Dual VET has been created with the participation of employer representatives. The role of institutions representing employers' interests has been strengthened to help implement the law which also stipulates their responsibilities. These representatives were agreed by stakeholders and listed in an Education Ministry decree. Selected from chambers and employers' associations to cover the relevant study fields (sectoral assignees), their role includes helping adjust VET to labour market needs, assuring its quality, certifying in-company training facilities, and training in-company trainers (Chapter 5). An umbrella body, the *Employer council for dual VET*, was set up in 2016 and aims to strengthen cooperation of all sectoral assignees: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the National Union of Employers; the Federation of Employers' Associations; the Chamber of Agriculture and Food; the Chamber of Trades; the Chamber of Mines; and the Chamber of Foresters. The Council is part-financed from the State budget ⁽⁸⁾. Including employers has allowed adjusting the volume and learning outcomes of practical training to their needs; it is also within their remit to promote the scheme and directly recruit lower secondary graduates.

1.2.3. Financial incentives for employers

To encourage enterprise involvement in dual VET, the VET Act has introduced corporate tax reliefs: tax exemption reducing training costs by 22%; tax bonuses of EUR 1 600 for 200 hours of practical training and EUR 3 200 for 400 hours of practical training within a tax period; and remuneration for learners' productive work is exempted from levies. These incentives do not apply to any other form of

⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/slovakia-balancing-general-and-vocational-components-slovak-secondary-vet> [accessed 18.4.2018].

⁽⁷⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/slovakia-new-vocational-education-and-training-vet-act-adopted> [accessed 18.4.2018].

⁽⁸⁾ www.rzsdv.sk

work placement. The negative impact on tax collection has been estimated to EUR 15 670 000 for 14 00 learners in dual VET after four years. A working group has been set up to propose improvements to the tax incentives. Legislation will be adapted as necessary.

1.2.4. Financial incentives for VET schools

'Black lists' and 'white lists' of programmes have been set up. Dual VET programmes are part of 'white lists', being of high labour market relevance, and benefit from a 10% increase in the funding received per student enrolled. The funding is reduced by 10% for programmes preparing for skills not required in the labour market; this includes VET programmes containing work-based learning if there is a surplus of graduates of such programmes in the labour market. However, there are no financial incentives for schools specifically dedicated to dual VET. On the contrary, schools can be demotivated to enter dual VET due to reduced per capita funding, unless they benefit from an inflow of new learners that companies are able to attract.

1.2.5. Better staff cost compensation

Schools call for the funding system to be more cost-relevant in terms of teacher and trainer salaries, which have been raised in recent years (Chapter 5). A new statistical tool providing data on pedagogical staff and detailed information by the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV) on the programmes offered is being set up; this is expected to allow for detailed staff cost estimates and more cost-relevant calculations of per-student funding.

1.2.6. Incentives to attract more learners

Stimuli based on the 2015 VET Act are more comprehensive and generous than in the past (Cedefop, 2016) and include:

- (a) performance-based state-funded motivation scholarships for learners preparing for shortage occupations. These equal 25%, 45% and 65% of the national subsistence minimum (EUR 58.78 per month for the best in 2015/16);
- (b) company scholarships amounting up to four times the national subsistence minimum (up to EUR 361.68 per month in 2015/16);
- (c) remuneration for productive work during training between 50% and 100% of a minimum wage (EUR 1.16 to EUR 2.33 per hour in 2016);

- (d) State scholarships for socially disadvantaged learners to support completion of secondary VET for learners who perform well (up to EUR 45.21 monthly for an average mark 2 ⁽⁹⁾).

1.2.7. Information and support structures

The employer council (Section 1.2.2) has developed a new portal which offers information on dual VET ⁽¹⁰⁾ and is linked with a previous website matching supply and demand ⁽¹¹⁾. The German-Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry also offers a dedicated website ⁽¹²⁾. Eight contact points are to be set up within the 2016-20 ESF supported national initiative *Dual education and increasing attractiveness and quality of VET* ⁽¹³⁾. Their task will be to support implementation in the eight self-governing regions, targeting all those involved in dual VET: employers, schools, learners and the wide public.

1.2.8. Envisaged improvements

The government elected in spring 2016 committed – in its manifesto ⁽¹⁴⁾ – to improving dual VET and setting up support mechanisms to encourage more SMEs to engage in training. In March 2017, the Ministry of Education published a *Learning Slovakia* strategy paper ⁽¹⁵⁾, launching the second phase of a comprehensive consultation process; it was the result of a first phase of a comprehensive consultation process ⁽¹⁶⁾. This strategy paper – for the first time – clearly defines and distinguishes between the diverse forms of work-based learning ⁽¹⁷⁾: dual VET as set in the 2015 Act on VET; work-based learning within VET school-enterprise agreements but without individual learning contracts; short-term internships; other short-term placements in companies; and company

⁽⁹⁾ Marks range from 1 (best) to 5 (worst).

⁽¹⁰⁾ www.rzsdrv.sk

⁽¹¹⁾ www.potrebyovp.sk

⁽¹²⁾ <http://www.dualpro.sk>

⁽¹³⁾ www.dualnysystem.sk

⁽¹⁴⁾ <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/6489.pdf> [accessed 8.8.2017].

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ministry of Education (2017). *Učiace sa Slovensko [Learning Slovakia]*. www.minedu.sk/data/files/6987_uciace_sa_slovensko.pdf

⁽¹⁶⁾ The first phase of a consultation process was initiated by publishing *Learning Slovakia* in autumn 2016; the second phase by publishing a full strategy paper in March 2017: <http://uciacesaslovensko.minedu.sk> A final version of *Learning Slovakia* is expected on 2 October 2017.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Subchapter 3-08 of Chapter 3 – *Vocational education and training* – describes in detail the measures to improve.

schools. The paper advocates making practical training available to all secondary VET students and supporting all forms of work-based learning through fiscal incentives. It proposes to include some form of work-based learning in all types of programme, as well as in general education.

Analysing the pros and cons of Slovakia's dual VET concept, the strategy paper makes proposals to improve and make it more flexible:

- (a) financial support for schools to cover costs for adjusting curricula and teaching methods to dual VET and partner company needs;
- (b) attractive financial incentives for companies engaging in dual VET (itemised tax deductions);
- (c) simplifying engagement in dual VET for micro companies (with up to 10 employees);
- (d) a new three-and-a-half year ISCED 353 ⁽¹⁸⁾ programme where the school-based theoretical part will be completed after three years, while practice will continue for an additional half-year in a workplace;
- (e) legislative backing for creating ISCED 353 graduate career paths;
- (f) a legal framework for establishing company schools and relating fiscal stimuli; these would be listed as VET schools, providing theory and practice, and so exempt from obtaining an agreement by sectoral assignees ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The proposals will be considered by the tripartite working group set up to prepare an amendment to the VET Act, expected in autumn 2017.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Not offering access to higher education.

⁽¹⁹⁾ At the time of reporting, there were three private schools operating as company schools.

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ⁽²⁰⁾

2.1. 2015 context and priorities up to 2020

2.1.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET

The quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) established in 2010, operates under the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV), funded by the Ministry of Education . It helps training providers implement systems/approaches in line with the EQAVET recommendation and identify areas for improvement.

In 2015 the national quality assurance approach was in preparation. Legislation in 2008 had called for schools to assess their provision, making school directors and State School Inspectorate responsible for quality assurance and quality check. The latter monitors schools' performance through predefined indicators on school management, conditions and education outcomes. Annual reports are publicly available to be used by schools and education authorities.

Guidelines and quality standards are meant to promote a self-improvement culture. Some schools periodically self-assess their performance. Stakeholders are sometimes involved in quality assurance implementation plans.

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is governed by the Lifelong Learning Act ⁽²¹⁾ which has gradually entered into force since 2010.

⁽²⁰⁾ Sources of this chapter:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

ReferNet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for 2016-20;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): <http://www.eqavet.eu>

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding;

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#>

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

Accreditation of programmes is the main quality assurance instrument and a prerequisite for the right to issue related qualifications/certificates. It is regulated by the Lifelong Learning Act, which defines programme design and delivery characteristics that providers have to comply with.

For the period to 2020, the country attaches medium-level priority to quality assurance. Its focus is two-fold:

- (a) introducing 'dual VET' and a more comprehensive legal base for relationships between companies, VET schools and students;
- (b) developing new national projects.

The intention is to build on field experience from the labour market. Action implies major reforms and extra funding, and involves social partners.

2.1.2. Continuous information and feedback loops

The 2008 Education Act called for cooperation with employers to develop labour market relevant programmes. The government-affiliated National VET Council, bringing together representatives of the State, Regions, employers and employees, was set as an ultimate coordinating body discussing sectoral and regional VET strategies, as well as crucial decisions related to provision of secondary IVET (such as national curricula for VET and VET programmes supply).

Developing systems for informing self-governing regions and schools about labour market needs started with the 2013 ESF project *Development of secondary VET*; this was supported by the unemployment data and skill needs forecasting model of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. A refined model offering more detailed data monitoring transition from learning to work is under construction under the surveillance of the Central Office.

In this matter, the country's priorities up to 2020 are two-fold, aiming to develop:

- (a) follow-up of VET graduate careers by labour offices, in relation to fields of study and occupations;
- (b) new national skills forecasting projects.

Action will build on field experience from the labour market, imply major reforms, including legislation, and extra funding, and involve social partners.

(²¹) 568/2009 of Coll. as amended.

2.2. Main actions in 2015-17

2.2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET

The national EQAVET implementation report containing 2016-20 measures to strengthen quality assurance in IVET has been prepared ⁽²²⁾. It complements the mechanisms that exist for all schools defining VET specificities, particularly the role of stakeholders and the use of quality indicators. Implementation is taking place in the framework of the 2016-20 ESF project *Dual education and increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET*. At the end of 2016, the QANRP joined a European project with a view to introducing peer review in the country.

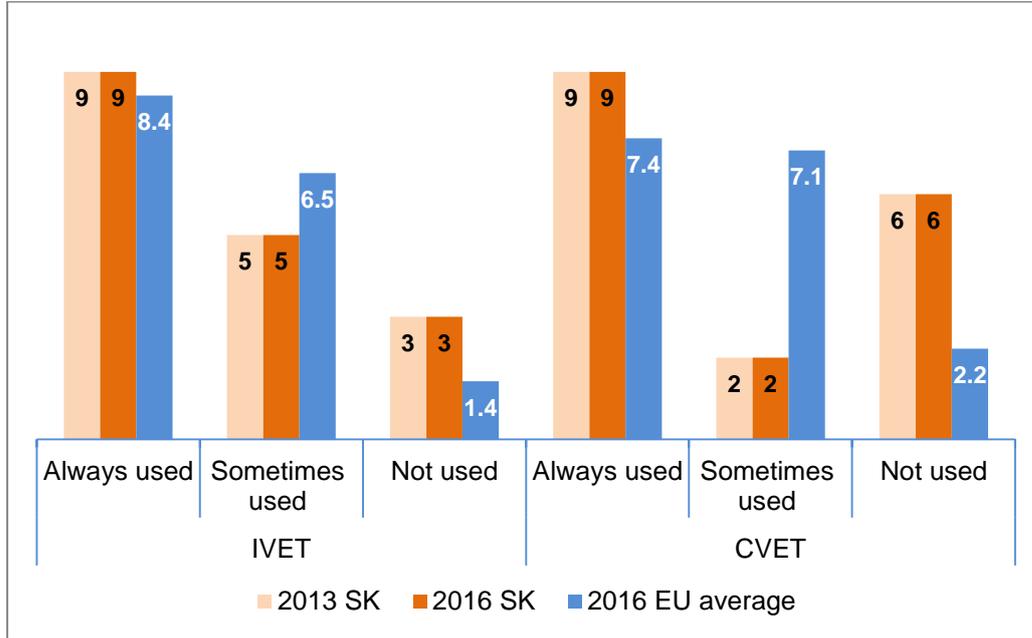
The national qualifications system is expected to bring about a major change in CVET. It defines national qualification standards and related assessment standards, which providers will have to follow after final adoption by the education ministry.

Slovakia's use of EQAVET indicators exceeded the EU average in 2016, for IVET and CVET. With most being 'always used', usage has remained at the same level as in 2013. However, indicators that relate to graduate tracking are used neither in IVET nor in CVET.

The strategy paper *Learning Slovakia* (Section 1.2.8) discusses anticipation and forecasting of labour market needs and collection of data for graduate tracking.

⁽²²⁾ www.minedu.sk/data/att/9671.pdf

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, nine were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2016 in Slovakia compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

2.2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET

Since the 2015 Act on VET, cooperation of the education ministry with employer representatives in curriculum design for dual VET has been set by legislation. Qualification and occupational standards developed with ESF support are expected to help increase VET's labour market relevance. *Learning Slovakia* suggests to formally mandate sectoral councils with an active role in forecasting and anticipating skills needs, informing about changes in the workplace and developing sectoral standards based on labour market needs.

Since 2016, as a result of the above law, data collection and analysis has been carried out by the Central Labour Office and the Centre of Scientific and Technical Information. Regional platforms have been created for different stakeholders to discuss the data which are used to update 'black' and 'white' lists corresponding to programmes required or not by the labour market and to inform the allocation of secondary VET entrants by the self-governing regions. New/amended provisions aim to ensure that VET graduate supply meets local/regional labour market demand.

2.2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in CVET

As a follow up to *Learning Slovakia*, the Association of Adult Education Institutions agreed in 2017 to a working group that would analyse the impact of CVET on employability and identify fields of learning with high employability potential, for better targeting of financing and provision.

2.2.4. Envisaged improvements

The 2017 *Learning Slovakia* strategy lists various other measures that range from complementing anticipation of labour market demand with graduate tracking, better employment data, employer surveys and big data analyses. It also proposes a study on the expected impact of Industry 4.0 on skill needs.

Encouraging schools to collect data on graduate tracking via social network tools and alumni clubs is among the initiatives included in the Ministry of Education's 2017 action plan. A call to investigate school graduate transition into the world of work was expected to be launched in 2017. Slovakia also participates in Cedefop's country reviews on 'governance of EU skills anticipation and matching systems'. Its specific focus is on developing a graduate tracking methodology and identifying ways to strengthen the skills governance system, which stakeholders perceive as not sufficiently stable.

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. Policy context 2015 and priorities up to 2020

Slovakia has one of the lowest shares of low- or unqualified people in the EU. However, similar to other countries, unemployment is highest among this group (37.6% in 2015). 60% of the unemployed and inactive low-qualified were at their most productive age. Participation of adults in lifelong learning (2.9% in 2016) ⁽²³⁾ and in active labour market measures has been low (Cedefop, 2016) . Adult learning has mainly been supported within active labour market policies and largely relies on ESF/European sources (70 % of total funding in 2015) ⁽²⁴⁾. Although funding for education and training in this context increased from 2.4% in 2014 to 6 % in 2015, it is much lower than in other EU countries ⁽²⁵⁾.

Within the EU's annual coordination of economic policies, the country has repeatedly been recommended to address youth unemployment and assist the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups more effectively, for instance through targeted training.

Early leaving from education and training, though far below the EU-28 average, was on the rise in 2015. Statistical data show disparities among different groups of learners, particularly the socially disadvantaged ethnic Roma. Improving their access to education and increasing their participation in VET ⁽²⁶⁾ has also been reflected in the above recommendations.

As the mismatch between graduates' knowledge and skills and those in demand became evident in the years after the 2008 crisis, work on devising a national qualifications register (NQR) and a qualifications framework (SKKR) – the two pillars of a national qualifications system – gained momentum. The 2009

⁽²³⁾ Eurostat, data for 2107.

⁽²⁴⁾ See the spending review of the Institute of Financial Policy (IFP, 2016), trend in Graph. 21, p.15.

⁽²⁵⁾ Ibid, Graph. 32, p.26.

⁽²⁶⁾ In 2014.

government decision to implement the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the Lifelong Learning Act, as amended in 2012, formed the basis for the work on SKKR. Related tasks became part of the 2012 national reform programme ⁽²⁷⁾. Between 2013 and 2015, sector councils set up occupational and qualifications standards, associating educators, employers, chambers and other actors within the ESF supported project *Development of the national qualifications system*.

The Lifelong learning Act also created preconditions to make the system more flexible by validating people's non-formally and informally acquired skills ⁽²⁸⁾; but opportunities remained limited and focused on verifying 'professional competence' against the qualification standards to entitle people to run a business within the remit of the Trade Licensing Act ⁽²⁹⁾. There is no credit system in VET; however, a unit based approach to designing qualifications and modularised provision was advocated in ESF-funded analytical studies ⁽³⁰⁾.

Focus in this Riga deliverable, which is considered medium-level priority, is on diversifying the routes to qualifications through:

- (a) short study programmes which would allow people to acquire certificates of apprenticeship in crafts and services through formal education regardless of their age;
- (b) more post-secondary programmes related to labour market needs as recommended by the OECD ⁽³¹⁾.

Actions will target young people and adults, build on field experience from the labour market, and involve stakeholders

3.2. Main actions in 2015-17

3.2.1. More and more flexible routes to labour market relevant qualifications

The so-called 'shortened study' (ISCED 353) was put place in 2015/16 in line with the Act on VET. It addresses young people and adults who want to broaden or deepen their qualification or acquire another to improve their employability.

⁽²⁸⁾ Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

⁽²⁹⁾ Act 455/1991.

⁽³⁰⁾ For example, Vantuch et al., 2014.

⁽³¹⁾ Fazekas and Kurekova, 2016.

Based on the mainstream three-year programme, it focuses on occupation-related areas and lasts either one or two years, depending on learners' previous field of study. The two-year study leads to a certificate of apprenticeship; participants of the one-year study are attendance and exam certified. As in other cases, per capita state funding applies. National statistical data suggest that, in the first two years, this programme type has attracted few learners ⁽³²⁾.

Learning Slovakia includes proposals for:

- (a) a more flexible qualifications system that would allow for modular approaches and shorter programmes through 'small' qualifications, for instance by subdividing the current comprehensive ones; the national qualifications system and framework in the making is expected to support this more flexible approach;
- (b) legislative backing to new qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 6 under development;
- (c) more 'pronounced' higher VET: specialised tertiary VET aligned to the related programme at upper secondary level as well as professionally-oriented bachelor studies.

3.2.2. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.2.1. National qualification framework

Developing the Slovakian national qualifications framework (SKKR) has been a lengthy process ⁽³³⁾. It has been part of the VET wider reform and lifelong learning and involved various stakeholders. Work on SKKR and the national qualifications register (NQR) ⁽³⁴⁾ has been closely related: the description of qualifications, in terms of standards, forms the content of the register; their levelling is the SKKR's content. Jointly with sectoral council representatives and other stakeholders, 1 000 qualifications, including standards, had been identified by the end of 2015 within the ESF project *Creation of the national qualifications system*. It was managed by ŠIOV which also acts as the national EQF reference point.

Following initial development, the report explaining how SKKR relates to the EQF was presented to the EU-level EQF Advisory Group at the end of 2015. An updated version was expected to be ready in 2017. SKKR will need to be made

⁽³²⁾ www.minedu.sk/eduzber.

⁽³³⁾ This section is mainly based on Cedefop, 2017b.

⁽³⁴⁾ The national qualifications register was developed within an ESF-funded project. The national qualifications system can be found at: www.kvalifikacie.sk

better known, once it is fully linked to the EQF. This requires indicating SKKR/EQF levels on certificates and diplomas. SKKR is expected to help make Slovakia's education and training system more flexible.

3.2.2.2. *Validation*

The learning-outcomes-based approach used to describe the qualifications in the new system could make validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills easier ⁽³⁵⁾. However, the lengthy SKKR and qualifications system process has affected progress in this field. A comprehensive national system is not yet in place; nor are SKKR or the national qualifications system ready to be used for validation. Current practices refer mainly to qualifications obtained by accredited continuing training or to exams after five years of experience gathered at work, confirming compliance with qualification standards. Certificates awarded are not the same as, nor equivalent to, those issued by formal education; they give access to further study at the same, but not higher, education level.

Learning Slovakia (Section 1.2.8) reaffirms the country's commitment to implementing a validation system by 2018 and stresses the need to develop quality assured procedures and assessment manuals to complement existing qualification standards.

3.2.3. **Guidance for young people and adults**

The ESF project *Dual education and increasing attractiveness and quality of VET* launched in 2016 aims at improving career guidance and counselling services for learners in VET and those who may move into it. It builds on related ESF-supported projects during 2013-15 ⁽³⁶⁾ which also generated comprehensive material on occupations in specific sectors. At the time of reporting, an orientation centre in support of career guidance and counselling was being established: 250 basic school staff and 300 from secondary VET schools are to be trained.

Eight counselling centres remained of the 25 set up across the country within the 2013-15 ESF project *Further education and counselling for adults as a tool for increasing the chances on the labour market*. Tasks include informing about opportunities to have skills recognised through exams in line with the 2009 Lifelong Learning Act ⁽³⁷⁾. Standards and training modules were designed and

⁽³⁵⁾ This section is mainly based on Cedefop, 2017b and on Cedefop et al, 2017.

⁽³⁶⁾ The online tool developed within the previous projects is available at www.profsme.sk. One of these projects was mainly targeted at staff working at pre-VET level.

⁽³⁷⁾ Zákon č. 568/2009 Z. z. z 1. decembra 2009 o celoživotnom vzdelávaní a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov [Act No 568/2009 Coll. of 1 December 2009 on lifelong

counselling staff were trained within the initiative,; financial support was provided for reskilling or upskilling people to acquire qualifications required by the labour market. The information available to Cedefop suggests that the future of these centres and the approach to funding such services are, however, unclear.

3.2.4. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups, jobseekers and employees

To address unemployment in the most vulnerable districts, five-year action plans were launched in 2016 in line with the respective legislation of 2015 ⁽³⁸⁾, ⁽³⁹⁾. Training centres and regional education centres, i.e. secondary VET schools, in 12 underdeveloped districts (out of 79) are to be ESIF part-funded. The training centres are meant to provide practically oriented training for the disadvantaged unemployed or low-qualified, while the regional education centres will provide training adjusted to local labour market needs:

- (a) mainstream secondary VET – preferably in dual mode – preparing for shortage occupations as indicated by the employment services;
- (b) CVET accredited according to the Lifelong Learning Act.

Regional education centres are expected to address the specific needs of SMEs and those interested in self-employment.

Since 2014, ‘vouchers’ within the ESF project *Re-pas* (Requalification passport) have supported free (re)training of the unemployed people. By spring 2016, those accepted onto the scheme corresponded to around 7.5% of the average registered unemployed in 2015 ⁽⁴⁰⁾. *Learning Slovakia* proposes an adult learning ‘voucher’ scheme.

ESF VET-relevant projects for the young during the reporting period include:

- (a) work placements for up to 29 year-olds, to improve their professional competences;
- (b) three to six months’ work experience for graduates (20 hours per week) and fiscal incentives for companies that create jobs for young people not in

learning and on the amendment to some other acts].

<http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/8688.pdf>

⁽³⁸⁾ Zákon č. 336/2015 Z. z. z 11. novembra 2015 o podpore najmenej rozvinutých okresov a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov [Act No 336/2015 Coll. Of 11 November 2015 on the support of the least developed districts and on the amendment to some other acts]. <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2015/336/20151215> and <http://www.nro.vlada.gov.sk/>

⁽³⁹⁾ Cedefop (2016).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ www.upsvar.sk/sluzby-zamestnanosti/nastroje-aktivnych-opatreni-na-trhu-prace/re-pas.html?page_id=566936

employment, education or training (NEETs) who complete this practice; this scheme replaces a previous one that proved unsuccessful ⁽⁴¹⁾.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Páleník et al. (2014).

CHAPTER 4.

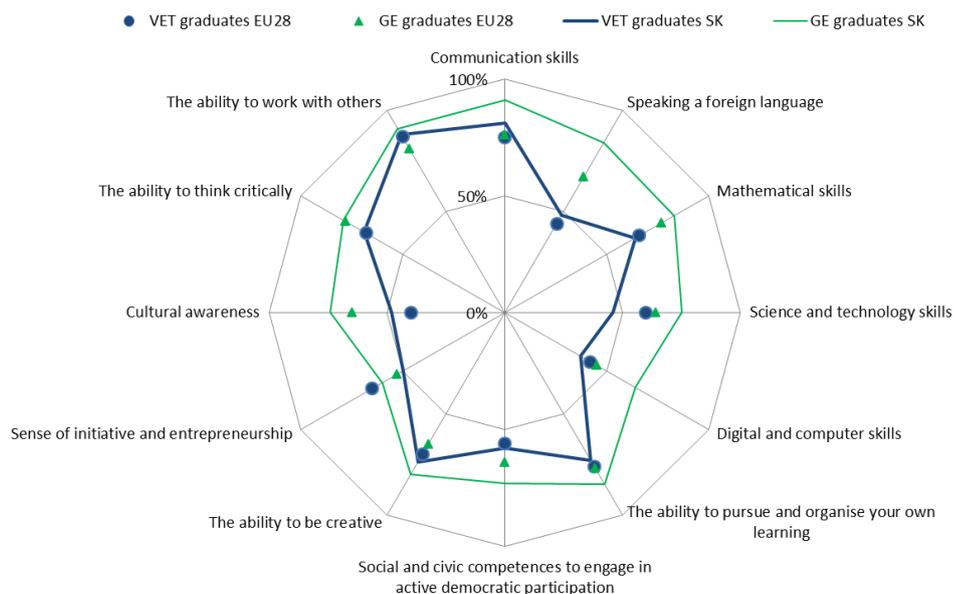
MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Context and policy priorities up to 2020

According to a Cedefop opinion survey, compared with general education graduates, those who completed upper secondary VET programmes feel they have weaker key competences ⁽⁴²⁾ (Figure 2), especially in:

- (a) foreign language speaking;
- (b) science and technology;
- (c) digital and computer skills.

Figure 2. **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education (GE) and VET – Slovakia**



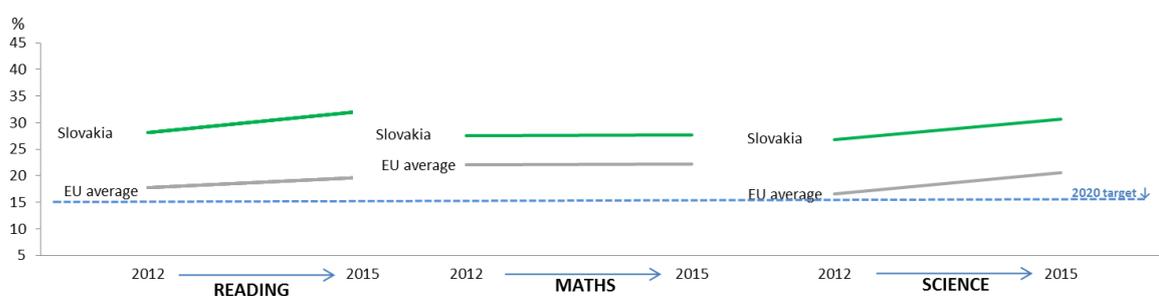
NB: Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop (2017c). European public opinion survey on vocational education and training.

⁽⁴²⁾ Cedefop, 2017c.

PISA results in 2015 pointed to an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, science and slightly in maths, compared with the 2012 results (Figure 3). This setback trend is also seen in the EU.

Figure 3. **Share of 15 year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing Level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrolls 69% of all upper secondary learners in the country⁽⁴³⁾, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in its programmes. National VET curricula comprise a considerable general education component that contributes to acquiring key competences, but not alone; those specifically relevant to occupation-related fields are developed in both general and vocational. School curricula elaborated for individual VET programmes based on the national curricula⁽⁴⁴⁾ comprise the following key competence groups:

- (a) acting independently in social and work life;
- (b) using knowledge interactively, ICT, communication in Slovak, mother tongue and foreign languages (one/two foreign languages are mandatory dependent on type of VET);
- (c) working in mixed groups.

Key competences have been reinforced as cross-curricular objectives but their operationalisation and monitoring are still challenging⁽⁴⁵⁾.

For the period to 2020, the country indicated that this areas would be of medium-level priority; within VET, work would mainly focus on developing the

⁽⁴³⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Updated in 2013.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ More information on each key competence in Vantuch and Jelínková, 2016a.

place of the Slovak language, foreign languages and other key competences in compulsory school leaving exams in dual VET.

4.2. Main actions in 2015-17

4.2.1. Key competences in initial VET

In the reporting period, policy developments have focused on adjusting curricula, including promoting financial literacy and preventing intolerance. Forward looking strategies, like the 2016 government manifesto, also addressed social and civic competences, literacy issues and maths and digital competences.

4.2.1.1. *Improving reading literacy*

In response to unfavourable PISA results, the Ministry of Education submitted to the government in 2016 a strategy for improving the level, and continuous development, of reading literacy ⁽⁴⁶⁾. The 2016/17 school year was declared year of reading literacy, accompanied by diverse activities, for example, competitions.

4.2.1.2. *Financial literacy*

A new national [standard for financial literacy](#) was approved in 2017. It replaces the 2014 standard and includes entrepreneurship competence. It also addresses areas like planning, income and labour; consumer protection; counteracting corruption and fraud through financial responsibility of consumers; consumers' decisions and financial management; loans and debts; savings and investment; risk management and insurance. The revision was based on the 2016 thematic assessment of learner performance in the final grades of basic and secondary education, including VET. Surveys on factors that may affect performance have also been launched ⁽⁴⁷⁾. Guides are being prepared to help schools integrate the standard in VET curricula. Small grants (up to EUR 2 000 in 2017) are available for schools, including VET, for teacher training in financial literacy. A dedicated portal ⁽⁴⁸⁾ has been created to inform schools, adult learning providers, citizens and partly also media about financial literacy issues. Yet, during public discussions of the *Learning Slovakia* strategy (Section 1.2.8), practitioners assessed the standard as being 'still too ambitious'.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=25517>

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Results are due September 2017.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ <http://www.fininfo.sk/sk/titulka>

4.2.1.3. *Preventing intolerance*

In 2016/17, in response to signs of increasing intolerance in the European Union, secondary education national curricula were supplemented by a document for teachers and counselling staff on how to prevent racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and extremism. In 2016, the governmental council for human rights initiated a review of national curricula and textbooks concerning human rights and democratic citizenship education. ŠIOV analysed all textbooks in secondary VET and found adequate reflection of the topic. However, competence development may need more attention.

4.2.1.4. *Calling for actions on key competences*

The 2017 *Learning Slovakia* strategy emphasises social and civic competences, reading and mathematical literacy as key areas where progress is required. While it does not explicitly refer to the term ‘key competences’, it calls for improvement particularly in mathematics, including increased support to extracurricular activities. The strategy also envisages establishing working groups on promoting digital literacy of learners, including online self-evaluation tools and potential ‘gamification’ in education.

4.2.2. Key competences in continuing VET

4.2.2.1. *Revision of the lifelong learning act*

At the end of 2015, a working group was established to prepare a new lifelong learning act, in which key competences for adults and validation of non-formal and informal learning should be reflected. However, work on the act has been postponed.

4.2.2.2. *Promoting key competences of Roma people*

Lack of key competences among members of the Roma community is an obstacle to acquiring appropriate education and qualification. For some adult Roma, particularly those living in segregated settlements, it is a long-term barrier to employability. In 2017, the government updated and complemented the action plans of its 2020 strategy for integration of the Roma population. Financial inclusion was introduced as a priority. Financial literacy measures are supported by ESF and include developing alternative learning models based on the revised national standard (Section 4.2.1.2) and promoting non-formal training.

4.2.2.3. *Don't BE disQUALIFIED* projects

Don't BE disQUALIFIED (NedisKVALIFIKUJ SA!) is the motto of a call for projects by the education ministry in 2016 on key competence development and enhancing/upgrading skills. Continuing VET is a component of individual projects. Selection is to be completed in 2017 but applications are already more than double the available ESF shared funded budget of EUR 15 million.

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

5.1. 2015 general context

Within the framework of the EU's annual economic policy coordination cycle, Slovakia has repeatedly been recommended to work on improving the quality of teacher training and making the profession more appealing. The teaching career, particularly in VET, has not been able to compete with those in business and industry given its low status and poor pay. After a strike in 2012, the government had introduced a salary increase of 5% annually until 2015.

According to 2014 data, VET school teaching staff are older than in other education sectors and have the highest share of those at retirement age. More than 70% are female, more than half of those teaching practice are men. In the period 2010/11 to 2015/16 the number of VET school teachers and trainers decreased by around 18% ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

As in other countries, different categories of teaching staff work in upper secondary VET. In VET schools, they include:

- (a) teachers of general and vocational subject areas;
- (b) trainers in workshops or labs, nationally referred to as 'masters of practical training'.

A recent amendment to legislation has clarified their status. Instructors responsible for provision of training in enterprises are company employees and not considered pedagogical staff, covered by the respective legislation (2009 Pedagogical staff Act) ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Teachers are trained at universities. They have considerable autonomy, though programmes must be accredited by a commission affiliated to the government. Future general subject teachers follow the same training whether they go into general education or VET. To teach occupation-related subject areas, university graduates in the respective fields have to add on studies in

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Cedefop (2016), Table 4.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The information in this section is mainly based on Vantuch and Jelínková, 2016b and on Cedefop, 2016.

pedagogy, also provided by higher education. For VET practice in schools, future trainers need to complement their upper-secondary occupation-related qualifications (ISCED 354) with studies in pedagogy that is currently not available. They need to apply for bachelor programmes that are attractive, as they lead to better pay, but not available in a type needed.

The 2009 Pedagogical staff Act had already aimed at making teaching more appealing. It established different staff categories, four career levels and a credit system for accredited continuing professional development (CPD). Within the ESF project *Professional and career growth of teaching staff*, professional standards were developed and piloted, but not published.

Responsibility for teacher CPD lies with the heads of school and is based on annual plans. While most of the training is provided by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, much of it relied on ESF joint funding. Although it is not their responsibility, professional and employer organisations also provide CPD for teachers. Some offer places on courses for business and industry professionals for reduced fees or for free.

Eligibility for public funding has been linked to competence development in areas covered by the respective professional standards. This has apparently contributed to largely supply-driven CPD and 'credit hunting', as the information available to Cedefop suggests. A 2014 survey by the teachers' chamber revealed staff discontent.

The above recommendations and related measures in Slovakia's 2015 national reform programme have helped make this Riga deliverable high priority.

5.2. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools

So far, policy-makers seem to have focused on developing strategies and amending legislation, addressing qualification requirements, competence development in pedagogy, career opportunities and salaries.

5.2.1. Easing access to teaching

The 2015 legislation amending the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act has made qualification requirements more flexible to attract (more) people from business and industry to teaching and make it easier to change subject areas/positions:

- (a) specialists in occupation-oriented areas are not required to comply with qualification requirements in pedagogy provided that they teach at most 10

- hours per week; ensuring/assessing their teaching competences is the school principals' task;
- (b) those who would like to move to other areas/positions, would only need to do the pedagogy part required for the new position.

5.2.2. Improving salaries

While it will take some time for these legislative changes to become fully effective, salaries have already increased. Following (further) pay rises in 2016 (4% plus another 6 %), another was announced for autumn 2017. Stating that highly competent teachers are key to putting the government's education and training agenda into practice, its 2016 manifesto envisaged further increases by 6% annually on average from January 2018 onwards ⁽⁵¹⁾.

5.2.3. Policy commitment: improving teacher training and teaching quality

According to the information available to Cedefop, university programmes are perceived as theory-focused, with little attention on practice; psychology and pedagogy appear to be geared more for general education than VET. Based on an analysis by the Education Policy Institute, the 2016 manifesto committed to making VET teacher training more practice-oriented, not least by involving employers. Reflecting these intentions, the 2017 *Learning Slovakia* strategy (see 1.2.8) suggests to:

- (a) review initial training and update pedagogy-related professional standards for those teaching VET practice;
- (b) adjust learning outcomes of pre-service bachelor studies and training of experts from business and industry better to VET's specificities;
- (c) design a new two-year master degree programme as an alternative path to teaching qualifications for graduates from practice-oriented bachelor studies who, after some work experience, are interested in a VET teaching career.

5.3. Continuing professional development for teaching/training staff in VET schools

5.3.1. 2015 context and policy priorities up to 2020

For 2011-14, CPD activities addressed several Bruges Communiqué deliverables: fostering entrepreneurship skills, creativity and innovation; helping learners develop career management skills; training to assist disadvantaged

⁽⁵¹⁾ <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/6489.pdf> [accessed 18.4.2018].

groups. These seem to have been mainly ESF-supported initiatives and outreach to VET staff is not fully clear. Around 36% of the staff trained in curriculum design by end-2014, as a follow-up to decentralisation in 2008, were teachers and trainers of occupation-related subject areas.

The need for higher CPD participation was one of the issues the European Commission stressed in its 2015 and 2016 reports on the country's economy ⁽⁵²⁾. The 2014 survey by the teachers' chamber pointed to inadequate and missing offers for staff in occupation-related subject areas. More than 60% of the respondents would have appreciated more validation opportunities for competences acquired outside accredited CPD.

Considering also the changes brought about by the 2015 Act on VET and those that are to follow, it appears logical that the country's focus within this Riga deliverable is on introducing and supporting CPD of teachers and trainers in VET schools. *Learning Slovakia* envisages reform: policy is to be supported by national-level initiatives in an otherwise decentralised governance approach.

5.3.2. Main actions in 2015-17

The steps taken so far have focused on amending legislation and policy commitments for further CPD improvements.

5.3.2.1. Improving the credit system and career opportunities

Since the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act, a wide range of in-service programmes/courses have awarded credits, potentially making it easier to achieve attestation level. Staff can move from beginner to independent teacher stage and then to attestation at first and second (advanced) level. The 2015 amendment expanded awarding credits for specialised school manager training. At the same time, opportunities to acquire credits through other activities than in-service training have been reduced; validation of competences acquired in non-accredited CPD needs to be addressed. Improvement is expected from the *Learning Slovakia* strategy paper.

The 2016 government manifesto aimed at further changing the credit system and career development opportunities. It envisaged certification in line with professional standards for pedagogical staff and experts employed by regional

⁽⁵²⁾ European Commission staff working document. Country report Slovakia 2015. SWD (2014) 44 final 2. Brussels 18.3.2015.

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_slovakia_en.pdf and

European Commission staff working document. Country report Slovakia 2016. SWD (2016) 93. Brussels 26.2.2016.

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_slovakia_en.pdf

schools. Implementation of the standards was still pending at the time of reporting. As they followed a different approach from occupational and qualification standards developed within the work on a national qualifications system, the education ministry has initiated further investigation into the issue ⁽⁵³⁾.

5.3.2.2. *Policy commitment: establishing new career opportunities*

Learning Slovakia advocates better career opportunities for trainers. The Small Trades Union ⁽⁵⁴⁾ and the Chamber of Trades ⁽⁵⁵⁾ are supporting this through institutionalising new positions for staff who hold a certificate of apprenticeship (without tertiary level education) and linking these to master craftsperson (EQF level 4) and 'licensed master' (EQF level 6) qualifications that should be jointly designed with representatives of craftsmen and small trades.

5.3.2.3. *Policy commitment: improving CPD through employer involvement*

For CPD programmes to be accredited, experienced VET teachers with second level attestation or university teachers with a PhD in a related field and minimum five years' experience needed to guarantee their quality. The 2016 manifesto aimed to open up this role to 'outstanding professionals from practice' to improve CPD relevance: this measure was one of the first to come into force within the same year. The respective change of legislation (2009 Pedagogical Staff Act) is still in the pipeline.

Reaffirming its intention to engage employers in VET teacher and trainer in-service training, the government suggested they could support placements in companies. To support competence development, *Learning Slovakia*, advocates more resources, helping to cover training costs related to technological change which, so far, public sector institutions have not offered.

5.3.2.4. *CPD as follow-up to changes in legislation/approaches*

Following up legislative changes by adequate training also takes time, so some of the initiatives carried out in the reporting period relate to pre-2015 reforms. These include CPD:

⁽⁵³⁾ Vantuch and Jelínková (2016b).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ www.szz.sk [accessed 18.4.2018].

⁽⁵⁵⁾ www.szk.sk [accessed 18.4.2018].

- (a) in line with the approach introduced by the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act within the ESF initiative *Professional and career growth of teaching staff* (until mid-2015);
- (b) within the ESF project *Creation of the national qualifications system* (until autumn 2015);
- (c) to familiarise VET teachers and trainers with dual VET in short credit awarding courses designed within the ESF project *Development of secondary VET* (from 2015/16 until end 2020).

5.3.2.5. *CPD within cross-country cooperation in VET*

As the dual VET scheme requires that staff have the necessary competences, bilateral projects tend to include training for in-company staff (Section 5.4). To prepare all partners, the 2012-16 *VET for the labour market* project, within the Swiss-Slovak cooperation programme, was extended to offer short credit awarding courses to VET school staff. Around EUR 850 000 were assigned to update knowledge and skills of around 500 VET teachers and trainers from December 2016 to March 2017 in their respective fields: electrical engineering (more than a third), construction (around 25%), food-processing (around 25%), chemistry and hairdressing.

5.3.2.6. *Supporting teachers to help learners develop key competences*

The 2015 education ministry's grant scheme for schools, supporting financial literacy and entrepreneurship, also addresses teaching staff, including those working in VET. A manual assisting teachers to implement the National financial literacy standard and accredited CPD programmes to strengthen relevant teaching skills has been developed. Financial literacy related projects were also supported within a grant scheme aimed at attracting innovative schools to elaborate a specific topic and to develop good practice examples for other interested schools. The 2016 call for projects offered a total EUR 59 300 (95% cofinancing with a ceiling of EUR 2 375 per project).

5.3.2.7. *Supporting teachers in their work with disadvantaged learners*

No specific developments have been reported on in-service training to assist better disadvantaged learners, including Roma, except ESF supported projects. A new stimulus comes in 2017 with the implementation of the 2016-19 ESF project *Open school for all* capitalising on the experience of earlier ESF projects run by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre. This project is aimed at further strengthening professional competences of teachers and teaching assistants in

providing inclusive education of Roma within mainstream general education, as an important prerequisite of provision of subsequent VET.

5.4. Training for VET trainers/mentors in enterprises

5.4.1. 2015 context and policy priorities up to 2020

Putting dual VET in place on a larger scale, requires sufficient numbers of adequately trained in-company staff ⁽⁵⁶⁾; this has shaped policy makers' focus on introducing certified training for in-company trainers (instructors) and respective legislation. This is seen as a major reform as, prior to the 2015 Act on VET, there was no regulating legislation. It implies extra funding and giving employer associations some responsibility.

5.4.2. Main actions in 2015-17

5.4.2.1. *Access requirements for in-company trainers in IVET*

Requirements for in-company trainers have been set: certificate of apprenticeship (ISCED 353) in the respective study field plus three years' practice as fully qualified workers in the respective occupation. In addition, they need to complete a specific training programme ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

5.4.2.2. *Regulating training: giving employers responsibility*

Training of in-company trainers is regulated by the 2015 Act on VET and has been in force since the academic year 2015/16. It is shorter and more flexible than for teachers. It should be completed within one year of their appointment and needs to address: learners' rights and obligations; organisation of training; training/work-related safety and health issues; and education standards, curricula and assessment. Responsibility lies with employer associations.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Whether their training is considered initial or continuing depends on the perspective: in terms of their future role or from an employee-career perspective. Hence, in this country chapter only the term 'training' is used. For the cross-country synthesis, however, to ensure consistency with the information on other countries and Cedefop's ReferNet thematic perspective series, Cedefop has subsumed developments on this issue under 'initial training of in-company trainers'.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Cedefop (2016).

Training may be offered by various parties, provided that it is recognised by the professional or employer organisations in charge (58). In 2015, the Commerce and Industry Chamber – the key player in this field – adopted its own regulation. In 2016, the Employer Council for dual VET approved guidelines on training for in-company trainers working with young people within the dual VET scheme (59). Guidelines for training of those working outside dual VET were also approved (60).

Funding of training for in-company trainers in dual VET is covered by the ESF project *Dual education and increasing attractiveness and quality of VET*.

5.4.2.3. *Training measures within or inspired by (cooperation) projects*

Several (usually local and small scale) courses have been offered within or inspired by different pilots and bilateral cooperation projects. They include:

- (a) a 28-hour modular course combining face-to-face and distance learning for future trainers in the mechanical and electrical engineering sectors, designed by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; this is based on experience gathered in a retraining programme for multipliers within the ESF-supported *Development of secondary VET*;
- (b) a 20-hour accredited course as part of the 2012-16 Swiss-Slovak cooperation project *VET for the labour market*;
- (c) training provided by the German-Slovak Chamber of Industry and Commerce (61);
- (d) a local 32-hour course within a cooperation project with Austria.

Within the ESF project *Dual education and increasing attractiveness and quality of VET* (62) that ŠIOV manages, a new programme has been envisaged to cater for 700 in-company trainers. This programme is expected to build on experience gathered within the Swiss-Slovak and other projects. At the time of reporting it was not yet clear how much of the overall project budget of around EUR 34 million until October 2020 would be assigned to trainer training.

(58) Nationally referred to as 'sectoral assignees', i.e. organisations selected from chambers and employer associations to represent employer interests by VET study field.

(59) <http://web.sopk.sk/storage/vzdelavanie/IPV-SDV/IPV-SDV-priprava.pdf>

(60) <http://web.sopk.sk/storage/vzdelavanie/IPV/IPV-zp.pdf>

(61) <http://www.dsihk.sk/sk/vzdelavanie/vzdelavanie-instruktorov>

(62) www.dualnysystem.sk

5.4.2.4. *Professionalising in-company trainers*

Paying more attention to CPD for in-company trainers would be a logical step in the coming years. Cedefop' sources suggest that employer organisations are likely to support further training for in-company trainers, once dual VET has been in place for a time.

5.4.2.5. *Adult learning staff*

The National Lifelong Learning Institute has designed a 150-hour modular course based on standards; it covers andragogy, didactics and personal, social and reflexive competences and a skills demonstration test. The intention was to make the course and standards a qualification requirement and establish adult learning 'lecturers' as a regulated profession ⁽⁶³⁾.

⁽⁶³⁾ Vantuch and Jelínková (2016b).

Conclusions

Policy developments are consistent with the priorities Slovakia indicated to follow up the Riga conclusions and some of the recommendations the country received in the context of economic coordination at EU level. Implementing dual VET at upper secondary level and making adjustments as necessary is one of the main activities.

Evidence indicates that steps have been taken to provide the grounds for making VET teaching and training more attractive for people from business and industry. But progress so far seems to have focused on raising salaries. Salary increases, easier access, redesign of initial training and career opportunities are all measures that can bring about change in a longer term perspective. To be sustainable, CPD for teachers and trainers would require continuous support and adequate resources. National data may also be helpful to inform decisions on needs-based supply and resource allocation. The government's intention to involve the employer side in VET teacher and trainer CPD could benefit their collaboration and help address the issue of resources.

ESF-supported national initiatives and smaller scale projects seem to have played a major role in nearly all policy measures: from the VET reform to developing standards, qualification system and framework; guidance and counselling and measures for adults and the unemployed. While some recent initiatives seem to build on experience gained through pilots and projects, it is difficult to judge if this is done systematically.

Despite some development, policy-relevant data on skills and labour market outcomes to make VET more labour market relevant and activate different target groups still seem to be an issue. Responsibilities of different institutions do not always seem to be clear. Better coordination and more capacity building, as well as better use of existing data and experience from other sectors, such as tracer studies in higher education, may be helpful.

Much of the information available to Cedefop relates to policy commitments and intentions. This is partly understandable, as the current government took office in 2016. Policy documents seem to cover measures for young people and those relating to the formal education and training system extensively. However, the envisaged amendment of the lifelong learning legislation seems to have been postponed. The information available to Cedefop on other policy developments for adults, in particular the low-skilled and the unemployed, is limited.

The impact of recent reforms will take some time to become tangible.

List of abbreviations

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CPD	continuing professional development
EaFA	European alliance for apprenticeship
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European structural funds
IVET	initial vocational education and training
NEET	young people not in employment, education or training
NQR	national qualifications register
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
ŠIOV	State Institute of Vocational Education
SKKA	Slovakian qualifications framework
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VET	vocational education and training

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