

Measures to support the low-qualified and the long-term unemployed

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 SLOVAKIA

Timeline

2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation
2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation
2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation
2025 Implementation		

ID number 28572

Background

Slovakia suffers from uneven development of regions, causing a significant difference between employment and unemployment rates in respective administrative districts. Some of the districts lagging behind also experience a comparably high share of long-term unemployed, often low-skilled and socially excluded.

Objectives

Based on specific criteria, underdeveloped districts are entitled to additional support from the government (state budget and EU funds). Developing action plans for respective districts addressing unemployment and identifying relevant investment opportunities is a precondition for the intervention of the government. Some measures address VET as an instrument for improving the qualifications of those at risk of unemployment.

Description

Five-year action plans were launched in 2016 to address unemployment in the most vulnerable districts. Training centres and regional education centres, i.e. secondary VET schools, in originally 12 and gradually 20 districts (out of 79), identified as underdeveloped, were partially funded by ESIF.

The training centres are meant to provide practice-oriented training for the disadvantaged unemployed or low-qualified. The regional education centres are expected to address the specific needs of SMEs and those interested in self-employment. They 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.

The government permanently assesses development in respective districts. Action plans are evaluated, supplements to plans created if needed, and, since 2018, development priorities must be set by respective district offices. A newly set up Government Council for underdeveloped districts discusses these priorities prior to their approval including earmarking of funds by the government. In 2019, a set of development priorities for underdeveloped districts was adopted by the Government, after consultation with district offices. The prioritised lines of action include:

- (a) achieving, in all districts, effective networking of stakeholders involved in regional/district development and relevant sectoral policies, and strengthening technical assistance for implementation of policies;
- (b) providing low qualified adults from disadvantaged backgrounds (particularly those from marginalised Roma communities) with access to upskilling pathways, with emphasis on the acquisition of work habits and skills for employability;
- (c) purchasing education and training materials for jobseekers;
- (d) investing (including school infrastructure and equipment) in programmes related to high-demand professions;
- (e) creating a training centre for students and jobseekers in the IT and electrical engineering sectors.

Underdeveloped districts also include a significantly high share of Roma. Substantial improvement for these is expected from the creation of regional education centres.

In the reporting period, VET-relevant national ESF projects, Practice for employment, Restart for young unemployed and Training of young registered jobseekers, were in place, all aimed at improving professional competences of young people; Re-pas+ and Kompas+ were among the training schemes. The ESF national project Graduate practice starts up employment, offers three to six months of work experience for graduates (20 hours per week) and fiscal incentives for companies that create jobs for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) who complete this practice; this scheme replaces a previous one that proved unsuccessful. All these projects relate to the Youth guarantee initiative.

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, four new action plans were approved. As of March 2020, 20 districts are identified as lagging behind and all have action plans approved. To support development activities in 2020, according to the Act on Regional Development Support (539/2008), a call for projects was launched in December 2019 with a total budget of approximately EUR 1 million. Eligible applicants can receive a grant of between EUR 10 000 and EUR 50 000 per project, with 10% financing input from their own resources. Eligible activities also include raising the level of education, qualifications and improving the preparation of children and young adults for the labour market.

ESF projects addressing the unemployed running under the supervision of the labour ministry are in progress.

2020 Implementation

The agenda of underdeveloped districts was transferred from the office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Investments and Informatisation to the newly created Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation from 1 July 2020.

On 25 November 2020, the government discussed annual priorities of some underdeveloped districts and the new projects envisaged to fulfil the objectives of their action plans. An interesting example is a project aimed at the establishment of a regional education centre specialising in CNC metal processing and metrology in

mechanical engineering in the town of Snina in Eastern Slovakia, with a budget of EUR 90 000.

2021 Implementation

In August 2021, calls were launched enabling five districts lagging behind in development to receive funding to fulfil selected priorities of their action plans, some of which are VET-related. In the Bardejov District, it is envisaged to address the low-qualified, in line with two priorities:

- (a) C2. Supporting secondary school training and adaptation centres for future occupations, creating conditions for adaptation of the workforce according to the requirements of the labour market;
- (b) C3. Supporting the social economy and local employment for the adaptation of the low-skilled workforce.

2022 Implementation

The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation elaborated a new methodology for monitoring and evaluating regional support to the least developed districts that is valid from 28 March 2022. Of the 20 least developed districts 11 prepared their development plans and 16 launched new calls for proposals for the provision of regional subsidy in line with the new methodology. In some districts, activities in support of VET were explicitly listed as eligible. For example, in the Kežmarok district, Activity A.3 reads as follows: Supporting companies delivering dual VET in cooperation with secondary VET schools.

On 20 January 2022, the Stará Ľubovňa district was declared as one of the least developed districts. Thus, currently, 21 out of 79 districts qualify for additional support specified by district development plans.

2023 Implementation

Development plans of the least developed districts and specific initiatives such as Catching-up regions initiative are instrumental for effective cohesion policy. There were a total of 20 least developed districts registered by the end of 2023.

2024 Implementation

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2024 - Implementation phase

The Council of the Government for Regional Development and EU Cohesion Policy was set up in 2024, following the request of regional and municipal leaders to strengthen support for regions, cities and municipalities, also from the perspective of more effective use of EU funds.

Shifting some responsibilities from the central government to regional self-governments is envisaged as well as the redefinition of criteria for identification of districts eligible for special support under cohesion policy.

New legislation on the support of priority districts replacing the legislation on the support of least developed districts is in the pipeline. Currently, there are 19 least developed districts, as one district (Snina) was deregistered in April 2024 as a consequence of improvements in respective indicators. These districts, characterised by a disproportionate share of low-qualified and long-term unemployed people are primarily supported by EU sources.

In addition to active labour market policies focusing on increasing the employability of low-qualified and long-term unemployed, the education ministry focuses on improving

their basic skills. For example, in October 2024, the scheme, Development of basic skills of adults - the path towards inclusion and employability, was launched with a total allocation of EUR 6 million.

As a strong preventive measure to reduce low-qualified youth at risk of low employability, five pilot training centres affiliated with secondary VET schools will be created within the 2024-2027 ESF+ project 'Creation and operation of pilot training centres at secondary VET schools' with a total allocation of EUR 1.970 million. Within the first phase, lacking qualifications will be identified in all eight regions. This analysis will facilitate the selection of secondary VET schools and programmes to efficiently address the gap in regional labour markets. These programmes will be developed in cooperation with employers offering labour market-relevant qualifications similar to programmes in formal IVET, however, not fully equivalent. They will focus exclusively on vocational competences, excluding the general education components required for obtaining a formal education certificate.

2025 Implementation

An amendment of the Act on adult education (292/2024) resulted in the obligation of training centres to apply for accreditation of any programme targeting early leavers from education and training and adults who achieved the so-called professional qualification (fourth sub-framework of the Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR)) at SKKR/EQF level 3. These programmes should attract low-qualified adults (including NEETs) and should offer them at least a certificate of apprenticeship, and for those with a certificate of apprenticeship to receive a 'maturita' school-leaving certificate entitling them to apply for higher education. Progress in the project aimed at piloting training centres is currently hampered by pending accreditation procedures. These procedures are under development by the Sector Councils Alliance, which took over accreditation responsibilities from the education ministry. Full operation of the new procedures is expected from January 2026.

Bodies responsible

- Parliament of Slovakia
- Government Council for Underdeveloped Districts
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Investments and Informatisation
- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation
- Council of the Government for Regional Development and Cohesion Policy of the European Union

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Adult learners

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Act No 112/2018 on social economy and social enterprises](#)

[Cedefop ReferNet Slovakia \(2018\). Social enterprises to fight long-term unemployment](#)

[Act No 336/2015 on the support of the least developed districts](#)

[Act No 539/2008 on regional development support](#)

[The call Development of basic skills of adults - the path towards inclusion and employability](#)

[A list of the least developed districts](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Slovak national qualifications framework

The development of the SKKR has been a lengthy process. It progressed in parallel to the wider reform of VET and involved various stakeholders.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem


IVET CVET

2020 Completed

National skills strategy

The education ministry has started an international project (with a budget of EUR 350 000)

aimed at elaborating a National skills strategy for the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the OECD.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28572>