

Flexible routes to labour market relevant qualifications

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE



SLOVAKIA

Timeline

2015 Implementation	2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation
2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation
2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation	

ID number 28570

Background

A minimum of three years of training leads to a certificate of apprenticeship. This has stimulated calls from non-qualified practitioners for the provision of shorter training leading to a formal qualification and/or to a recognition of prior learning and experience gained in the workplace. This is why the government advocated the creation of the so-called 'shortened studies' (ISCED 353). In addition to the efforts directly targeting formal VET, making the qualification system more flexible is advocated: the Slovak qualifications framework envisages the creation of 'smaller' qualifications reflecting labour market needs. This can also support 'segmentation' of current formal qualifications and modularisation of VET programmes.

Objectives

Making education and qualification systems more flexible.

Description

The so-called 'shortened studies' (ISCED 353) were put in place in 2015/16 in line with the Act on VET (61/2015). They target young people and adults who want to broaden or deepen their qualification or acquire another one to improve their employability. Based on the mainstream three-year programme, they focus on occupation-related areas and last either one or two years, depending on learners' previous field of study. Two-year studies lead to a certificate of apprenticeship; participants of the one-year programme are attendance and exam certified. As in other cases, per capita State funding applies. National statistical data suggest that this programme type has attracted few learners.

In September 2017, the education ministry published a Learning Slovakia strategy paper, based on a draft version from March 2017. Learning Slovakia included 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;
- (b) legislative backing for new qualifications (master of craft and licenced master) at EQF levels 4 and 6 for craftsmen, allowing an alternative career of skilled workers reducing the current hunting for mainstream *maturita* certificates and bachelor degrees;
- (c) promoting higher VET: specialised tertiary VET aligned to the related programme at the upper secondary level as well as professionally-oriented bachelor studies.

National policies promote professionally oriented bachelor studies and introduce dual VET into tertiary education. While the first professionally oriented bachelor programme has been already introduced, focusing on the automotive sector, establishing universities of applied science, advocated by some experts, is not envisaged. No further developments took place to introduce dual VET into tertiary education.

A call for proposals on Developing sector skills was launched on 21 December 2017. The scheme invites projects aiming to provide adult learners with skills on demand in the labour market (including ICT) and immediately applicable at the work place. Projects should offer a maximum of 480 lesson hours, comprising a maximum of 30% theory and a minimum of 70% practice. Target groups include people in employment as well as jobseekers. Up to 2018, 51 projects were submitted within the first three rounds, of which 24, from a variety of sectors, were contracted and are in process of implementation. The total budget for this scheme is EUR 10 million.

<p>2015 Implementation</p>
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<p>2019 Implementation</p> <p>A focus on the segmentation of existing ‘large’ qualifications that are appropriate for the development of ‘smaller’ qualifications can be addressed within the ESF project System of verifying qualifications.</p> <p>Within the five rounds of the call for proposals on Developing sector skills, run between 21 December 2017 and 2 May 2019, 113 projects were approved and are in progress.</p> <p>On 27 December 2018, a call to support the development of professional bachelor programmes was launched with an allocation of EUR 13.5 million for less developed regions and EUR 1.5 million for the Bratislava region. However, progress is slow as there have been no projects implemented up to February 2020. Only EUR 4.1 million were requested by applicants after the second round of submission closed on 31 October 2019.</p>
<p>2020 Implementation</p> <p>Within the call Developing sector skills, 93 projects were in progress in February 2021.</p> <p>Within the national ESF project System of verifying qualifications, a fully-fledged system of validation of non-formal and informal learning should be developed and piloted regarding 312 qualifications. Awarding these qualifications opens the door to alternative and more flexible routes to qualifications compared to formal IVET.</p>
<p>2021 Implementation</p> <p>Within the call Developing sector skills, 66 projects were in progress until February 2022. Implementation was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic and led to the decision of the labour ministry to allow for prolonging project duration and to apply e-learning and other forms of distance learning during the pandemic restrictions.</p> <p>The national ESF project System of verifying qualifications is in progress, focusing on</p>

recruiting national experts responsible for quality assurance of validation of non-formal and informal learning and authorised specialists responsible within respective sectors for the smooth progress of individual validation processes.

According to the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30, approved by the government on 24 November 2021, and the subsequent action plan for 2022-24, the qualifications system should be made more flexible by introducing 'smaller' qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates). The fourth sub-framework of the Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR) has been designed to cover appropriate segments of current VET qualifications: units of learning outcomes. New units of learning outcomes reflecting emerging labour market needs should be developed initiated by practitioners, such as Sectoral councils. The strategy also suggests introducing 'vocational *maturita* examination' (SKKR 4) and qualification 'technician-specialist' (SKKR 6) that can be achieved via validation of non-formal and informal learning.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the ESF national project Don't lose your job - educate yourself, aims to train employed job seekers who are at risk of losing their jobs due to technological and social changes or who are unable to respond with their existing skills to the ever-increasing pressure of changes in the labour market. The training requested must also meet labour market needs, and the related education is, therefore, supported

- (a) for the acquisition of skills necessary to practice a profession officially declared by the Ministry of Labour as a shortage occupation;
- (b) to acquire or increase the level of digital skills, with digitisation and automation processes; technological changes and technological developments in the labour market;
- (c) for the acquisition of skills necessary to practice green professions. e.g. working in the circular economy emphasising the efficient use, reuse and recycling of resources, supporting biodiversity and ecosystems conservation, reducing carbon emissions and overall pollution of air, soil and water.

The training requested must also meet the individual needs of the applicant. The result of passing the IT Fitness Test, which is available free of charge online, is, therefore, a recommended attachment to the application. Training participants receive a one-time financial contribution.

Within the call Developing sector skills, 64 projects were in progress and 55 were completed by the end of 2022.

2023 Implementation

An assessment of the impact of various types of training offered to adults through financial schemes operated by the labour or education ministries highlighted the need to rethink quality management, particularly in terms of accreditation of programmes and institutional accreditation. Consultations on new legislative measures took place to create a system that is both flexible and quality-assured. Unlike higher education, institutional accreditation has not been introduced. Instead, certification of adult education providers is a precondition for entering the accreditation process of individual educational programmes. Thus, it acts as an initial quality filter rather than a certification of overall high quality.

2024 Implementation

Reflecting the recommendations of the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30, the new Act on adult education (292/2024), adopted by the parliament on 30 October 2024, has introduced individual learning accounts (ILAs) and microcredentials to stimulate access to training and to make the qualifications system more flexible. At the same time, strong regulatory requirements are stipulated.

Certification of adult education providers is awarded by the education ministry after successful application of secondary schools and other adult education providers, that unlike higher education institutions, do not have an internal quality assurance system in place.

To obtain certification, providers must conduct self-evaluation in five areas:

- (a) educational process;
- (b) staffing, guaranteeing quality of educational activities;
- (c) approach to learners;
- (d) external relations and membership in professional associations;
- (e) management of institution and quality assurance processes.

The self-evaluation report must demonstrate compliance with 14 standards and 44 criteria across these areas. Applicants must submit an online application via the education ministry portal, responding to questions related to the standards, and provide supporting documents along with an official Improvement Plan based on the self-evaluation report. Certification is valid for five years and requires compliance with legal obligations. As an alternative certification route, providers that have implemented an internal quality assurance system may receive certification automatically by presenting an equivalent certificate issued by a recognised quality assurance body.

VET schools must be certified before they can apply to accredit adult education programmes, issue microcredentials, or provide training financed by ILAs. ILAs can be used to cover the costs of formal education only for accredited programmes according to procedures set by the Sector Councils Alliance. Additionally, adult education providers that are not secondary schools or higher education institutions must be certified and must receive approval from a school offering education in the relevant field or from a national guarantor responsible for quality assurance in validation processes, confirming the relevance of the respective programme to the labour market needs and its compliance with quality assurance requirements.

2025 Implementation

A new amendment of the Education act (245/2008), adopted on 21 October 2025, abolished the so-called shortened studies (ISCED 353). The report accompanying the law justifies this change by indicating that the Act on adult education (292/2024) allows for obtaining a certificate of apprenticeship in a shorter period than the two-year study within the formal education system. This abolition fits the ongoing trend to shift the responsibility for shaping qualifications, accrediting programmes of adult education, and validation of non-formal and informal learning to the Sector Councils Alliance. The education ministry expects that microcredentials, individual learning accounts, and validation of non-formal and informal learning will offer a more flexible way of achieving a qualification for adults who need shorter, targeted routes.

The amendment to the Education act also shortened some post-secondary ISCED 554 studies (currently offered by secondary schools) by one year. Affected studies are considered losing attractiveness under new circumstances, explained by lawmakers as follows: the new Higher education act, also adopted on 21 October 2025, creates conditions for recognition of achieved learning outcomes in these studies and creates a shorter way to achieving a Bachelor's degree that is more attractive than the title resulting from completed original ISCED 554 studies.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (until 2024)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Adult learners

Education professionals

School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Act No 245/2008 on education](#)

[Learning Slovakia strategy paper \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 \(in English\)](#)

[IT Fitness Test](#)

[Act No 292/2024 on adult education](#)

[Information system on adult education](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Act on adult education (292/2024)

The education ministry initiated new legislation instead of the originally proposed law on lifelong learning, which was previously recommended by the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 and approved by the government.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30

LLCS 2030 focuses on four thematic areas: the qualification system; basic skills and civic education; lifelong learning, counselling, and motivation of citizens for lifelong learning; and building a system of skills management and identification of lifelong learning needs.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

System of verifying qualifications

The project System of verifying qualifications, run by the State Institute of Vocational Education, started in 2019 and is expected to be completed on 1 February 2023.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative


Subsystem

CVET

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

2025 Implementation

National programme for the development of education

On 27 June 2018, the government approved the National programme for the development of education (NPDE). The NPDE was adopted, with 106 measures to be fulfilled until 2027. Some measures related to regional schooling and higher education are relevant also to VET.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2018 Completed

Learning Slovakia strategy paper

In September 2017, the education ministry published the Learning Slovakia strategy paper, following a public discussion on a draft version from March 2017.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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