

Incentives for VET schools to provide practical training

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** SLOVAKIA

Timeline

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2015 Implementation | 2016 Implementation | 2017 Implementation |
| 2018 Implementation | 2019 Implementation | 2020 Implementation |
| 2021 Implementation | 2022 Implementation | 2023 Implementation |
| 2024 Implementation | | |

ID number 28561

Background

Following the Act on VET (61/2015), upper secondary VET can be offered as:

- (a) school-based programmes with practical training (mainly) in school workshops;
- (b) mixed scheme, with school-based learning along with in-company training within the framework of school-company agreements (contracts) based on previous legislation;
- (c) dual VET combining school-based learning with in-company training backed by individual contracts between learners and companies.

School-based programmes with school workshops often suffer from outdated equipment, as the cost of state-of-the-art technologies may exceed what the public budget allows.

The financing scheme is based on a per capita principle, making schools predominantly interested in the quantity of learners regardless of labour market needs. In the past, financial benefits for schools looking to supply quality graduates lacking in the labour market were not used to complement per capita funding.

Creating 'black' lists and 'white' lists of initial VET programmes was initiated in 2009 by the Act on VET (184/2009). Such lists inform school directors about programmes with an insufficient or excessive supply of graduates. Schools are financially encouraged to open 'white' list programmes and not 'black' list programmes (per capita funding 10% higher for programmes in-demand or 10% lower for programmes not required in the labour market). This measure does not apply to dual VET, as dual is, per definition, considered as required by the labour market. This measure can, however, affect the provision of programmes containing other forms of work-based learning. They can even be enlisted into the 'black' list provided there is a surplus of graduates of such a programme in the labour market. The first two official versions of both 'black' and 'white' lists were issued by the education ministry in 2014 and 2015.

Objectives

The proposed incentives aim to support responsiveness of the VET system to labour market

needs, especially in the regions.

Description

In December 2016, a call was launched to invite proposals for the modernisation of the equipment and premises of school-based practical training (VET schools' workshops and specialised facilities, e.g. libraries). Additional components could relate to equipment for dormitories in support of inclusive education, reconstruction of school premises, or improving the energy performance of buildings. The call was launched within the framework of the ERDF part-funded Integrated regional operational programme (IROP). Selection and implementation of proposals were carried out in 2017. However, despite some improvement in 2018, the mixed scheme in initial VET is fiscally disadvantaged compared to dual VET.

New versions of the 'black' and 'white' lists of IVET programmes were issued in February 2017. The funding was reduced by 10% for programmes preparing for skills not required in the labour market (including VET programmes from which graduates were already in surplus in the labour market). However, there were no financial incentives for schools specifically dedicated to dual VET. Schools could have been demotivated from entering dual VET due to the reduced per capita funding. The reduction of per capita funding was abolished.

2015 Implementation

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

From the 2018/19 school year onwards, schools enjoy the full per capita funding for learners enroled in dual VET. Schools expressed the need for the funding system to be more cost-relevant in terms of teacher and trainer salaries, which have been raised in recent years. A new statistical tool providing exact data on pedagogical staff and the existing programmes has been set up. The move is expected to allow for detailed staff cost estimates and more cost-relevant calculations of per-student funding. However, legislation (355/2017) only led to refining allocation formulas.

2019 Implementation

115 projects were approved within five rounds of the IROP call. Subsequently, additional calls were launched, with results not yet published. Nevertheless, only applicants from the Nitra and Trnava regions were eligible to apply for the remaining EUR 4 428 540 by 20 February 2020 out of the original budget of EUR 98 832 378.

2020 Implementation

The newest 'black' and 'white' lists were developed in January 2020. In contrast to the earlier lists with the nationwide validity, the new lists address respective regions. Programmes are included in the 'black' list valid for a respective region if they belong to the top 10% of programmes with the highest graduate unemployment rate and 20% of programmes with the smallest indicated supply/demand difference. Regional sensitivity is a positive step, as regions are heterogeneous and, in the past, some regions were dissatisfied with placing some programmes into the national 'black' list. However, regional granularity might create problems in case of programmes preparing for professions (often leading to self-employment, e.g. masseur) that are over the limits in some regions but not in neighbouring regions. This signals a need for refining the methodology, as subnational labour markets are not identical with administrative regions.

Seven out of the 115 IROP projects, aimed at improving practical training and renewing

equipment for practical training, are already completed. There are also six new IROP projects implemented from 2020 or 2021 in the Banská Bystrica region, and 11 new IROP projects implemented from 2020 or 2021 in other regions, responding to two calls under Increasing the number of secondary VET school students in practical training.

Five schools in the Prešov region and eight schools in the Banská Bystrica region were selected as pilot schools and were offered an investment that can also improve practical training within the Catching-up regions initiative of the World Bank and the European Commission.

2021 Implementation

The 2020 black and white lists remained valid, but there are no specific financial incentives from the State budget for schools to provide practical training in cooperation with companies. The ESIF projects allowing for better equipment or renewal of school workshops are also incentives to support provision of practical training. The flexibility of national curricula (State education programmes) allows for increasing the share of practical training based on an autonomous decision of the school. Putting stress on practical training is particularly visible within the Catching-up regions initiative and projects from the Integrated regional operational programme (IROP) related to this initiative.

2022 Implementation

The 2020 black and white lists and related financial bonuses remained valid. Supporting practical components of training within secondary VET programmes via diverse projects continues but the strongest effect is visible in regions involved in the Catching-up regions initiative. There is no systemic national measure that explicitly supports the provision of a quality practical component in VET, as there is only one measure that offers financial incentives for dual VET and companies, but not for VET schools.

The most visible recent impact of the promotion of dual VET is seen in the high share of prospective pre-school education teachers (290) and commercial academy learners (762). They account for 63% of all dual learners (1 671) in programmes offering 'maturita' school leaving certificates rather than certificates of apprenticeship.

In contrast to this, in programmes offering a certificate of apprenticeship, which are considered the traditional heart of VET where technical or crafts-related programmes dominate, only 14.4% of learners signed an individual contract on dual VET as of 15 September 2022. 63.1% of learners are trained in schools exclusively and 20.3% have spells of out-of-school training under an institutional contract between the school and the company, which is not considered as dual VET by law and, therefore, neither partner qualifies for any benefit from the State budget. The remaining learners (2.2%) received only theoretical training in the current school year.

2023 Implementation

There is no new developments in place although new initiatives are inevitable. As demonstrated by the 2022 data, participation in dual VET is extremely low in programmes offering certificates of apprenticeship and expanded to programmes providing a 'maturita' school leaving certificate, where other forms of work-based learning can be more efficient. There were 9 848 dual learners as of 15 September 2023, compared to 9 347 contracted dual learners as of 15 September 2022. Despite strong promotion of dual VET and the possibility of signing contracts during the ongoing school year, no substantial breakthrough can be expected. It is clear that measures focusing on making dual VET more attractive for small companies must be introduced, alongside addressing the administrative burdens induced by law concerning the provision of dual VET. Signing a learning contract does not change the status of a dual learner who remains a VET school student rather than an employee of the company. This system could be, therefore, replaced by a cooperation agreement between schools and a companies with reduced administrative burden. Furthermore,

the State still does not support alternative forms of direct VET school-company cooperation aimed at providing practical training. There are no fiscal incentives available for companies ready to offer practical training outside the dual VET format based on an agreement directly between a school and a company without the involvement of employers' representatives as the intermediary body.

2024 Implementation

The 2024-26 Implementation plan of the National programme for the development of education (NPDE) addresses exposure to work-based learning during VET as the fifth of seven strategic objectives. Specifically, it highlights three of the 40 government manifesto-related projects: Modern education in secondary schools, Better quality of 'maturita' school leaving examination, and Vocational education of higher quality and more attractive. Of the 14 identified activities, the most relevant is expanding opportunities for practical training through new forms of work-based learning (WBL) including dual VET. Fulfilment of activities in support of WBL to achieve a 60% share of graduates benefitting from WBL is contingent upon an amendment of the Act on VET planned for 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (until 2024)

Target group

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Optimising VET funding

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

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

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Black and white lists](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Catching-up regions initiative

The Catching-up regions initiative, in cooperation with regional authorities, aims to identify challenges and priority areas at regional level to direct investments to. Improving VET programmes in line with labour market needs can foster economic development in regions lagging behind.



Type of development

Practical measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Incentives for IVET learners

Stimuli based on the 2015 VET Act are more comprehensive and generous than in the past, including:



Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Incentives for companies to offer dual VET

To encourage enterprise involvement in dual VET, the VET Act (61/2015) had introduced corporate tax reliefs for training companies:



Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation**Introducing dual VET**

The Act on VET was amended in March 2015 (61/2015). 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 and made available upper secondary VET delivery in three forms:



SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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