

Sector Councils Alliance

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 SLOVAKIA

Timeline

2023 Approved/Agreed

2024 Implementation

ID number 47910

Background

The labour ministry established sectoral councils and the umbrella Alliance of Sectoral Councils to support the creation of the National System of Occupations (NSO). The NSO was to define the requirements for knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform work activities at jobs in the labour market. NSO and its occupational standards were developed for job positions following SK ISCO (4-digit granularity) and revised as necessary, supported by European sources. The Act on employment services (5/2004) and the statute approved by the labour ministry originally established the alliance as an advisory body of the ministry in the field of employment and active labour market policies. According to the statute, the alliance meeting had to be held at least once every calendar quarter. Under pressure from employer representatives who found in the alliance and sectoral councils a platform to express their interests, the labour ministry decided to reconstitute the alliance as a brick-and-mortar institution, Sectoral Councils Alliance (SCA), legally connected to public resources and to transfer to it several responsibilities originally performed by the state.

Objectives

In the submission report to the 2022 amendment to the Act on employment services (5/2004), the labour ministry declared the strategic nature of the scope of the Sectoral Councils Alliance and sector councils and the need to 'ensure the sustainability of the management system of these decisive instruments of active labour market policy aimed at describing the demands of the labour market for jobs and the transfer of these needs to the system of lifelong learning'.

Description

The amendment to the Act on employment services established the Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) as the interest association of legal entities. Membership is stipulated by law containing labour and education ministry representatives, representative associations of employers and representative associations of trade unions. Admission of other members is possible based on the statute of the SCA agreed with the government.

According to law, the SCA 'establishes sectoral councils covering relevant sectors of the economy, ensures their activity and evaluates their functionality and efficiency'. The SCA can be funded by the European Union, the State budget, and other sources, including membership fees and income from own activities. The SCA becomes a strong political player since the influence of the education ministry on the performance of sector councils is

only possible through the SCA.

2023 Approved/Agreed

On 1 February 2023, the Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) and its office were registered in the Register of interest associations of legal entities. The labour ministry, the education ministry, and several employer and trade union organisations (the Federation of Employers' Associations of the Slovak Republic, the National Union of Employers, the Association of Industrial Unions and Transport, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic and the Joint Trade Unions of Slovakia) are among its founders.

The SCA's main activities include:

- (a) coordinating and updating the National System of Occupations (NSO) and National Qualifications System (NQS);
- (b) establishing and evaluating the performance of sectoral councils, ensuring their activity;
- (c) aligning the lifelong learning system with the current and future needs of the labour market;
- (d) determining the standards of professional knowledge, professional skills and abilities for the performance of work activities in jobs on the labour market;
- (e) creating, for national and international purposes, a database of knowledge and skills necessary for employment in the labour market, aligned with the current and future needs of the labour market;
- (f) cooperating in the creation and updating of qualification standards and assessment standards;
- (g) proposing changes to the conditions for verifying qualifications;
- (h) being actively involved in solutions for setting up the lifelong learning system so that it meets the requirements of employees in the labour market, development trends, and current and anticipated innovation trends;
- (i) determining the areas of development of key competences in the lifelong learning system with a special focus on digital skills, business skills and financial literacy;
- (j) coordinating activities related to strengthening the motivation of individuals for vocational training based on the needs of the labour market, including the coordination of financial instruments designed to support lifelong learning;
- (k) assessing the quality of educational programmes intended for education and preparation for the labour market and assessing the quality of further education programmes, including their compliance with the current and future needs of the labour market;
- (l) coordinating the process of detecting, monitoring and predicting development trends in the labour market, including skills necessary for the performance of work activities, the creation and disappearance of jobs, and emerging and disappearing occupations;
- (m) ensuring inter-ministerial coordination of activities related to monitoring trends in the labour market and defining quantitative and qualitative workforce requirements in connection with their qualified preparation for employment in the labour market;
- (n) sharing information and experience from the implementation of NSO and NQS through publicly available information portals;
- (o) publishing documents and materials prepared within the scope of the alliance and information about its activities on its NSO website;
- (p) supporting the strengthening of professional and analytical capacities of social partners for building the infrastructure and communication platform of social dialogue and for the development of social partnership;
- (q) performing other tasks and goals set by the association for itself.

In 2023, the SCA launched two projects funded by the Programme Slovakia 2021-27

- (a) Development of professional capacities of social partners, with an allocation of EUR 23.7 million for the years 2023-29 to strengthen social dialogue. One of the explicitly named sub-activities is 'building expert and analytical capacities' to strengthen the quality of policymaking;

- (b) Sectoral Councils Alliance - forecasting labour market trends and needs, with an allocation of EUR 29.9 for the years 2023-28. The main goal is 'to create a system environment for forecasting the needs of the labour market and aligning the educational offer accordingly through the activities of experts in 24 sector councils' (collecting data, forecasting labour market developments, adjusting occupational and qualification standards).

The second project aims to update occupational and qualification standards to reflect changes in the labour market, the growing demand for a qualified workforce, and the creation of new occupational standards, as the basis for updating the NQS. At the same time, the project outputs should 'form the basis for determining the structure and content of the educational system at all levels and in all forms, with special regard to further education'. This indicates that the SCA and the sectoral councils should be capable of shaping the 'educational system at all levels'.

2024 Implementation

The Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) declares on its website its role in formalising and intensifying cooperation between central government represented by education and labour ministries, employer representatives and trade union representatives in defining changes in the labour market and setting up 'adequate education', to bring better employability of the inhabitants and more efficient spending of public financing on education for the labour market.

Via the Act on adult education (292/2024) amending the Act on VET (61/2015), the education ministry strengthened the influence of the SCA on formal education, especially secondary VET. The SCA is now explicitly named as a participant in coordinating vocational education and training 'for the labour market at the national level', in addition to professional and employer organisations with responsibility for the respective fields of study already selected by the education ministry as 'sectoral assignees'. The alliance was originally supposed to cooperate with the education ministry in the creation and updating of qualification standards and assessment standards but by a decision of the ministry, the SCA is now entrusted with ensuring their creation and updating. At the same time, the education ministry commissioned the SCA to publish the 'National Qualifications System' on its website, although it was originally supposed to be built under the auspices of the education ministry on its platform. The SCA has indirectly become an institution of normative power: while qualification standards are not explicitly mandated by education legislation, the SCA has gained influence over them.

Currently, secondary schools follow educational standards when offering programmes leading to qualification documents, such as apprenticeship certificates. In the future, they may face pressure to align with SCA standards rather than those set by the ministry. There is no clear process to reconcile educational standards, which consider students' personal development, with the SCA's qualification standards, which may prioritise immediate labour market needs over long-term adaptability. According to the Education Act (245/2008), national curricula are issued by the education ministry in coordination with national-level VET bodies. With its recent inclusion in the list of coordinators under the Act on VET (61/2015), the SCA now has a role in shaping state educational programmes (national curricula).

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Sector Councils Alliance

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Learners with disabilities
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
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)

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders
Adult educators
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)
National, regional and local authorities

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

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

[Programme Slovakia 2021-27](#)

[Sector Councils Alliance website](#)

Related policy developments

2024 **Approved/Agreed**

Individual learning accounts

Reflecting the LLCS 2030 recommendations the State Institute of Vocational Education prepared a comparative study focusing on new European policies, ILAs and microcredentials.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2024 **Approved/Agreed**

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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

National implementation plan: Slovakia

Eight priority areas were identified in relation to the achievement of the objectives, five of which explicitly target VET, two target lifelong learning in parallel with VET ((f) and (h)) and one targets interlinking general education and VET (e):

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2023 Completed

Sector-driven innovations for an efficient labour market

The budget for this 2019-23 ESF project managed by the labour ministry in cooperation with Trexima Ltd. is approximately EUR 20 million. The main activities include:

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 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.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

Forecasting model for labour market needs

A forecasting model was developed in 2015 under the supervision of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF, public employment services authority). The labour ministry presents the forecast of labour market needs, structured by fields of study and regions, every year.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

The Employer council for dual VET

An umbrella body, the Employer Council for dual VET, was set up in 2016 aiming to strengthen cooperation between respective sectoral assignees involved in dual VET. The Council is partially financed from the State budget.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/47910>