

Swiss project in support of VET

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 SLOVAKIA

Timeline

2023 Design

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 47840

Background

Through the successful implementation of the 2012-17 project 'VET for the labour market', which was run by the State Institute for Vocational Education within the first Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Programme, teachers and trainers in Slovakia gained valuable experience in the functioning of dual VET. During their visit to Switzerland, employer representatives learned about differences in the functioning of dual VET systems in Switzerland and Slovakia. The Swiss experience influenced the preparation of the 2018 amendment to the Act on VET (61/2015). The Swiss side provided Slovakia with a methodology for linking VET and the labour market and trained a group of experts to apply this methodology. However, this experience and other Swiss expertise in VET have only been partially utilised, leaving the potential for further adaptation.

The Swiss side expressed willingness to co-finance further VET developments in Slovakia, provided that there was agreement on priorities and identification of weaknesses in the Slovak VET system. It was agreed that the weaknesses of the VET system in Slovakia include:

- (a) limited connection of post-secondary education to tertiary VET, which reduces permeability;
- (b) insufficient support and understanding of the importance of providing diverse forms of WBL;
- (c) challenges in the education and labour market integration of foreigners.

As part of the second Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Programme, a 'Support measure agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation (MIRRI)' was signed containing an agreement on the operation of the 2024-29 project 'Improving quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) towards labour market needs'.

Objectives

The long-term goal of the 2024-29 project is to address labour market gaps, reduce youth and adult inactivity and unemployment, and contribute to economic growth. Achieving this overall goal depends on progress in three areas related to the improvement of the response of the VET and lifelong learning to the labour market needs by systems' higher permeability and flexibility. Goals and specific outputs related to these areas are as follows:

- (a) Response of VET to the labour market needs is improved by higher involvement of entrepreneurs including work-based learning (WBL) at employers;
 - (i) innovative tools for strengthening WBL in sectors dominated by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs tested and available;
 - (ii) processes and tools for curriculum adjustments and their realisation available to providers of formal VET in sectors with a majority of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs;
- (b) Permeability of the VET system supported by lifelong learning is increased;
 - (i) making materials and processes for the introduction of vocational school leaving examination at secondary VET schools available;
 - (ii) adjusting programming documents to connect ISCED 554 studies (currently offered by secondary schools) with the first stage of higher education;
 - (iii) introducing the master examination (to strengthen the professional development and status of craftsmen in their field
- (c) Employability of foreigners is increased;
 - (i) auxiliary instruments allowing easier access for foreigners to labour market tested and available.

In contrast to the first two objectives that address systemic weaknesses of the VET system, the third objective focuses on challenges amplified by the war in Ukraine. Switzerland having a long tradition of supporting the labour market integration of foreigners will assist in the development of integration tools currently missing in Slovakia (methodology of language courses for foreigners targeting respective professions, development of communication skills of relevant players, and measures supporting social inclusion of foreigners).

Description

The main activities of the project comply with the three aforementioned objectives and six measures. The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation (MIRRI) serves as the National Coordination Unit while the project operator is the State Institute of Vocational Education in partnership with the Swiss Federal University of Vocational Education. Switzerland has committed up to CHF 5 750 000 (approximately EUR 6.2 million) covering a maximum of 85% of the total eligible project expenditures over 55 months (2024-28).

Project beneficiaries are:

- (a) VET learners with better employment possibilities and the possibility to acquire more easily tertiary education;
- (b) companies and entrepreneurs as a consequence of education programmes better tailored to the labour market needs in specific sectors: agriculture, construction, and the food industry.
- (c) foreigners based on the possibility to acquire the necessary language skills, recognise their qualifications, and adapt better to their working and everyday environment;
- (d) secondary VET schools due to improved school educational programmes (school curricula);
- (e) VET school staff with easier access to innovative training and individuals with the possibility to complete master examination confirming their professional skills and increasing their status.

2023 Design

During the year, preparatory work was resumed, although partly limited by the pandemic and the instability of the political environment in Slovakia. The framework agreement, including its annex (country-specific set-up), was concluded on 19 September 2023 between the Swiss Federal Council and the Slovak Government.

2024 Implementation

A project team was established at the State Institute of Vocational Education and the national coordination unit was established at the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation.

2025 Implementation

In January 2025, the State Institute of Vocational Education (SIOV) signed a partnership contract with the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET), followed by the partnership contract with ETH Zurich, signed in March 2025. Both institutions are crucial for understanding systemic features of VET in Switzerland and for the potential adjustment of the Swiss experience to Slovak conditions. The following are the first results in respective project segments:

- (a) Strengthening of WBL - in August and September, the SIOV signed four memoranda of cooperation with stakeholders in focus sectors: construction, the food industry, and two in agriculture. Expert groups were created, focusing on respective sectors. Cooperation between schools and companies was promoted at two national fairs, Coneco and Agrokomplex, supported by Swiss experts and SIOV specialists;
- (b) Permeability - graduate profiles, knowledge, skills and competences in post-secondary and bachelor studies have been examined, and changes to legislation were suggested. A door should be open for recognition of credits obtained within post-secondary studies in VET schools by higher education institutions. A new Higher education act (300/2025) created a legislative framework for this. The standardised vocational component of the 'maturita' school leaving examination for 'Mechanic setter' programmes with expanded practical training was prepared, and piloting is in progress in four VET schools;
- (c) Foreigners' integration - language courses for practical language skills are in preparation, as insufficient Slovak language command has been identified as a major obstacle for the transition of foreigners into the labour market.

In total, 73 experts, practitioners, and employer representatives participated in six study visits to Switzerland. Three visits covered the focus sectors, one focused on implementing vocational school-leaving examinations, one on the transition of foreigners, and one on aligning post-secondary and higher education studies.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV)
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (until 2024)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners with migrant background, including refugees
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Adult learners

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)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8
Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

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

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers
Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning
Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

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 promoting equality of opportunities

VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Related policy developments

2025 **Approved/Agreed**

Tertiary VET reinforcement

The education ministry reflected the 2023 Government manifesto by elaborating 40 projects and creating related project teams.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 **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):

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action plan

Subsystem

IVET 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**Creation of centres of excellence in VET**

The creation of CoVEs is determined by the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 adopted by the government on 24 November 2021.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**Easing access to the teaching profession**

The 2015 legislation amending the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act made qualification requirements more flexible to attract (more) business and industry professionals to teaching and to facilitate changes of position or subject areas.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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