

Slovakia

Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System

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Title: Slovakia: overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2005

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Abstract:

This is an overview of the VET system in Slovakia. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society;
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities;
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities;
4. Initial education and training - pathways and transition;
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults;
6. Training VET teachers and trainers;
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy;
8. Validation of learning - recognition and mobility;
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment;
10. Financing: investment in human resources;
11. European and international dimensions: towards an open area of lifelong learning.

This overview is part of a series produced for each EU Member State (plus Norway and Iceland). Each report is prepared by Cedefop's national network member (ReferNet) and is updated on an annual basis: this one is valid for 2005. Later editions can be viewed at http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can be found.

Keywords:

training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

Geographic term:

Slovakia

THEMATIC OVERVIEWS



Slovakia

01 - GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Established on 1st January 1993 after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia is a parliamentary democracy with a one-chamber parliament of 150 members elected for four-year terms. Political parties are allotted seats according to the percentage of votes they receive in direct elections. The president, elected for a five-year term by a two-round popular vote, is the head of state with no substantial executive powers. Slovakia is a member of the OECD (2000), NATO and EU (both in 2004). The country is composed of 8 state administration and self-governing regions. Despite solid economic growth, Slovakia is fighting with high unemployment and low employment rates. Part of the Roma minority living in segregated settlements is at high risk of social exclusion.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The country has an area of 49 034 km² with 5 379 455 inhabitants and a population density of 110 inhabitants per km² (Census, 26th May 2001). A total of 55% of the population lives in urban areas and 45% in rural areas. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia has experienced a huge decrease in birth rate and an ageing of the population. Live births declined from 80 116 in 1989 to 50 841 in 2002. Per capita financing introduced in 2004 is aimed at forcing the merging and closing of schools with low enrolments. A demographic trend broken down by age groups indicates the need for further restructuring of school networks.

Age-specific demographic trends by age groups until 2025

	TOTAL	0-24			25-59			60+		
		TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
2003	5379742	1815341	927859	887482	2701580	1342603	1358977	862821	340565	522256
2003(%)	100	33.74	17.25	16.50	50.22	24.96	25.26	16.04	6.33	9.71
2010	5400780	1550585	792807	757778	2854281	1426066	1428215	2854281	399035	596879
2010(%)	100	28.71	14.68	14.03	52.85	26.40	26.44	52.85	7.39	11.05
2025	5396429	1285728	657658	628070	2703833	1364049	1339784	1406868	592220	814648
2025(%)	100	23.83	12.19	11.64	50.10	25.28	24.83	26.07	10.97	15.10

Source: INFOSTAT Demographic prognosis 2002 (medium scenario)

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

Despite the decrease of employment in agriculture (10.2 % in 1994) and growth in the service sector (50.1 % in 1994), Slovakia is still characterised by a strong emphasis on industry.

Employed by sectors in 2003		
NACE CATEGORY	THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE	%
AGRICULTURE INCLUSIVE FISHING (A+B)	125.3	5.8
INDUSTRY INCLUSIVE CONSTRUCTION (C-F)	829.0	38.3
SERVICE (G-Q)	1 208.3	55.8
UNKNOWN	1.9	0.1
TOTAL EMPLOYED	2 164.6	100

Source: Statistical Office SR (Štatistický úrad SR), LFS

Out of 2 164 600 persons employed in the national economy, 1 947 600 are employees (44% in the public sector and 56% in the private sector). The total employment rate (57.7%) and the employment rate of older workers (24.6%) lag far behind the EU 2010 targets.

Unemployment in 2003						
	UNEMPLOYED (LFS)		DISPOSABLE REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED		REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED	
	NUMBER	RATE (%)	NUMBER	RATE (%)	NUMBER	RATE (%)
2003	459 200	17.4	403 222	15.2	443 356	16.7

Source: Statistical Office SR; Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny)

There is no substantial difference in the unemployment rates of men and women (0.5%). The youth unemployment rates, 56.9% in the 15 to 19 age group and 27.8% in the 20 to 24 age group, representing 33 000 and 90 700 people respectively, indicate the need to boost post-secondary education and reinforce entrepreneurs' involvement in initial VET.

According to Eurostat 2001 data, the total public expenditure on education for all levels of education was 4.03% of the GDP, and the total public expenditure on education was 7.8% of the total public expenditure.

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

Diagram of population in Slovakia (Age 25+) by level of education

Although Slovakia is among the EU leaders in the share of ISCED 3+ educated, the high share of ISCED 3C and the low share of ISCED 4+ levels indicate future risks for the implementation of a knowledge economy. In addition, only the Bratislava region is significantly better off.

Highest achieved level of education of 25+ aged in Slovakia and Bratislava region (%)							
	ISCED 1+2	ISCED 3C	ISCED 3A-GENERAL	ISCED 3A-VOCATIONAL	ISCED 4,5,6	ISCED 0	No RESPOND
SLOVAKIA	24.65	32.17	4.60	24.07	12.36	0.36	1.79
BRATISLAVA	14.97	25.08	6.59	25.45	25.74	0.11	2.06

Source: Statistical Office SR, Census 2001

A favourable low share of ISCED 0-2 educated population is confirmed by the low share (4.9%, LFS 2003) of early school leavers, which is significantly below the EU 15+10 countries average (15.9%). Nevertheless, the need to increase the number of tertiary educated is also visible.

Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 by ISCED level (% , 2003)				
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6	TOTAL (*)
EU 15 PLUS 10 ACCEDING COUNTRIES	32	46	20	98
SLOVAKIA	13	75	12	100

Source: Eurostat, LFS

(*) difference = no answer

02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

The key policy document approved by the government on 19th December 2001 and consequently passed by the parliament is the National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for the next 15 to 20 Years (Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov). Within Pillar No. 11 "Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning" out of a total of 12 pillars, lifelong learning and further development of VET is recognised as the highest priority.

Nevertheless, by the end of 2004 no concrete policies with clearly identified measurable indicators and benchmarks in support of VET/LLL had been implemented; except for the wiring of all primary and secondary schools to Internet and equipping them with ICT laboratories by the end of 2004 and measures set within ESF.

The 4th November 2002 Policy Statement of the Government of the SR (Programové vyhlásenie vlády SR) fully recognised the importance of education and in particular lifelong learning and announced the following:

- the introduction of financing based on per capita “normatives”;
- the increase of permeability within the education system and the reduction of barriers in transition from primary to secondary and from secondary to tertiary education;
- curricular reform stressing the improving of the quality of foreign language instruction and the speeding up of the ICT introduction;
- raising the social status of educators and making the teaching profession more attractive for young teachers;
- development of a new concept of lifelong learning reflecting international trends.

The issues affecting VET in a specific way are as follows:

- enforcement of school autonomy and support of “co-operation among schools, families, municipalities and enterprises” in the region;
- introduction of a “participative model of curricula” based on state and specific school curricula;
- secondary school maturity exams consisting of two parts – internal (school-based) and external (national standardised tests-based);
- tertiary education adjusted to the Bologna Declaration accessible for all interested and competent applicants.

The Government also declared increases in financing

- regional schooling and “gradually approaching the EU average (in GDP share)”; and
- higher education and “gradually achieving the level of OECD countries”.

The Policy Statement of the Government is gradually being fulfilled. Nevertheless the fulfilment of the following items is extremely questionable:

- to substantially increase investment in education due to Government commitment to achieve the Maastricht criteria as soon as possible;
- despite repeated efforts, Slovakia still lacks a comprehensive VET/LLL policy document and the Lisbon, Bruges, Copenhagen (Maastricht) development line is supported by rhetoric rather than concrete measures; for example:

- there is no national policy introducing quality assurance in VET;
- there is no national policy aimed at supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning; and
- there are no fiscal incentives stimulating private investment in VET and consequently CVT participation.

The National Action Plan of Employment for 2002 and 2003 (NAPE0203, Národný akčný plán zamestnanosti na roky 2002-2003) elaborated in accordance with the EU format included 25 measures closely related to education and training. The Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) has consequently elaborated a scheme for the implementation of measures containing 33 tasks. Most of them were related to Pillar I “Employability improvement”. Among 17 tasks focused on education system reform (I/1.1-13 of NAPE0203) the following three clusters are visible:

- rationalisation of the school network in connection with decentralisation reform;
- curricular reform and a need to strengthen links with the entrepreneurial sphere;
- supporting ICT at schools.

This document is aimed at making education and training systems comply with the European employment strategy. However the following weak points of VET are not easy to handle:

- low entry rates in formal post-secondary education and low participation rates in the education and training of 18-24 olds, leading to the high unemployment rate among the young;
- a lack of quality assurance and weak labour market intelligence as well as a lack of coherence in regional development planning;
- substantial and comprehensive curricular reform complementing and inter-linking “building blocks” already developed is pending.

NAPE 0203 also formed a base for the development of the ESF programming documents, such as the Single Programming Document NUTS II – Bratislava Objective 3 (Jednotný programový dokument NUTS II Bratislava cieľ 3), valid for the Bratislava region; and the Sectoral Operational Programme – Human Resources (Sektorový operacný program Ludské zdroje), valid for other regions.

Both these documents and their respective programme complements are currently the most important tools available for implementation of LLL/VET supporting policies (see1101) within both national projects and demand driven projects, all starting in autumn 2004.

Nevertheless, according to the VET community, the government does not have the capacity to concentrate on VET reform during this political period and some measures (maturita exam reform, VET schools normatives setting, slow progress in VET

curriculum reform) have been considered a confirmation of the lack of mutual respect between VET and general education.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

0301 - ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

After the chain of changes in responsibility towards VET since 1989, the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) is now the single national level authority essentially responsible for education. The ministry is responsible for the elaboration of all education policies making use of the services of directly managed institutions of which the most important are as follows:

- The National Institute of Education (Štátny pedagogický ústav) - general education curriculum including general subjects of VET schools; measuring educational output;
- The State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) - VET curriculum in co-operation with 14 sectoral expert commissions;
- The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva) - collecting information including UOE harmonised statistics in education, analytical studies;
- The Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie) - psychological aspects of child and youth development; and
- Five Methodological and Pedagogical Centres (Metodicko-pedagogické centrá) - in-service regional training of teachers).

The State School Inspection agency (Štátna školská inšpekcia) is a state administration body headed by the Chief School Inspector (hlavný školský inšpektor) appointed for a 5-year period by the Minister of Education (minister školstva). By law the State School Inspection is independent in its performance of school inspection, which is based on the annual plan and results in the annual report on the status of education and upbringing.

Other ministries play a limited role, e.g. in support of specific secondary VET schools (health, police, justice/warder, military) within their professional scope.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) is responsible for labour market training funding and organisation. Only programmes accredited by the Ministry of Education may be financially supported by respective labour offices.

Slovakia is in the process of decentralisation, with regional parliaments and heads of self-governing regions elected for the first time in December 2001 for four-year terms. Responsibility for the establishment of schools was transferred to the self-governing bodies on 1st July 2002. A new system of self-governing offices and sectoral state administration offices were established on 1st January 2004, and fiscal decentralisation is coming into force on 1st January 2005. The responsibility for primary schools and other establishments of local importance were transferred to municipalities, and the responsibility for secondary schools and other establishments of regional importance to self-governing regions. Schools, which are of trans-regional importance, e.g. bilingual schools established under international agreements or special schools for special education needs pupils, have remained under the responsibility of the state administration. Hence, the local/regional educational authority is currently of two types:

- the state administration, based on eight regional school offices;
- the self-governing administration, with offices of municipalities and eight offices of self-governing regions located in the same cities as the eight state administration regional school offices.

The first level of the state administration agenda in education is covered by school directors who are appointed to five-year terms; a school director selection process is obligatory every 5 years.

Before establishing or cancelling an education institution, a municipality/self-governing region is obliged to ask the Ministry of Education to register/de-register the institution. Without this registration/de-registration, the municipality and/or self-governing region cannot act. The law also requires a statement from the municipal school board or territorial school board concerning the intentions of the municipality or self-governing region.

Although limited freedom in finalising the curricula is given to schools (10% of the weekly instruction hours and 30% of its content may be adjusted according to local/regional needs) curriculum development is centralised. The Ministry of Education approves all curricula (the so-called basic educational documents (základné pedagogické dokumenty)); in case of VET finalised under the supervision of sectoral expert commissions affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education) and provide for textbooks.

Higher education institutions are autonomous and represented in contacts with the Ministry of Education by the Slovak Rector's Conference (Slovenská rektorská konferencia) and the Board of Higher Education (Rada vysokých škôl).

0302 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

According to § 42(2) of the Constitution of SR (Ústava SR), citizens have the right to free primary and secondary education, including secondary VET schools. Non-state (non-public) primary and secondary schools are entitled by the Constitution to collect tuition fees. Since January 2004 all schools receive equal per capita funding from the state budget regardless of their status in order to encourage the establishment of non-state schools. A similar policy in tertiary education officially proposed by the government is heavily opposed by the representatives of academics. Tertiary education in public universities is currently free of charge. The new legislation introducing fees equal to 0 to 30% of costs depending on the regulations of higher education institutions and complemented by a more generous system of scholarships is under consideration.

Here is the list of relevant legislation regulating regional schooling, higher education and "further education" such as continuing VET and LLL:

- School Act No 29/1984 (Zákon c. 29/1984 Zb. o sústave základných a stredných škôl (školský zákon)), substantially amended by Act No 171/1990, lastly amended by Act No 207/2004;
- Act No 279/1993 on School Facilities (Zákon c. 279/1993 Z.z. o školských zariadeniach), lastly amended by Act No 334/2002;
- Higher Education Act No 131/2002 (Zákon c. 131/2002 Z.z. o vysokých školách), lastly amended by Act No 528/2003; and
- Act No 386/1997 on Further Education (Zákon c. 386/1997 Z.z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní), lastly amended by Act No 567/2001.

In 2003 two new acts introduced a reform in the financing and management of regional schooling:

- Act No 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration and School Self-government (Zákon c. 596/2003 Z.z. o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve); and
- Act No 597/2003 on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Establishments (Zákon c. 597/2003 Z.z. o financovaní základných škôl, stredných škôl a školských zariadení).

The following are norms for financial management and remuneration:

- Act No 303/1995 Coll. on Budgetary Rules (Zákon c. 303/1995 Z.z. o rozpočtových pravidlách) as amended by subsequent provisions (last amendment by Act No 442/2003 Coll.);
- Act No 291/2002 Coll. on the State Treasury (Zákon c. 291/2002 Z.z. o Štátnej pokladnici) as amended by subsequent provisions (last amendment by Act No 428/2003 Coll.); and
- Act No 552/2003 Coll. on Public Works (Zákon c. 552/2003 Z.z. o výkone práce vo verejnom záujme) and Act No 553/2003 Coll. on Remuneration of selected public works employees (Zákon c. 553/2003 Z.z. o odmenovaní niektorých zamestnancov pri výkone práce vo verejnom záujme).

§§ 44-48 of Act No 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (Zákon c. 5/2004 Z.z. o službách zamestnanosti) stipulates the labour market training of job seekers and employees in need of increasing their employability.

There is no specific law on financing continuing vocational education and training and/or lifelong learning as it is not considered by the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo financií) to be worth specific fiscal incentives. The Ministry of Finance introduced a flat 19% tax rate in 2004 considering lower corporate tax a more appropriate instrument in support of CVET/LLL.

Act No 311/2001 Coll. of the Labour Code (Zákon c. 311/2001 Z.z. Zákonník práce) left the provision of paid or unpaid educational leave to the discretion of the employer and/or of the result of social dialogue.

0303 - ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

The legislative framework setting the structure of the social dialogue is comprised of:

- Act No 106/1999 Coll. on the Economic and Social Partnership (Tripartite Act) (Zákon c. 106/1999 Z.z. o hospodárskom a sociálnom partnerstve (zákon o tripartite));
- Act No 2/1991 Coll. on Collective Bargaining, lastly amended by Act No 553/2003 Coll. (Zákon c. 2/1991 Zb. o kolektívnom vyjednávaní); and
- Act No 311/2001 Coll. of the Labour Code (Zákon c. 311/2001 Z.z. Zákonník práce), lastly amended by Act No 461/2003 Coll.

The Tripartite Act regulates the tripartite relationship and also defines the representation of different social partners in the Council of Economic and Social Agreement (CESA, Rada hospodárskej a sociálnej dohody). The representation of

social partners in the CESA – the Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda Slovenskej republiky), the Federation of the Employers' Association of Slovakia (Asociácia zamestnávateľských zväzov a združení Slovenskej republiky) and the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky) – is equal. CESA was entitled to set up permanent and temporary working groups, negotiate, express positions and make recommendations on fundamental issues of economic and social development. This act has been recently subjected to strong criticism by the government. The Council of Economic and Social Agreement has gradually turned to the battlefield as a consequence of conflicts between the government and trade unions, and the dissolution of the employers' organisation into two representations.

Social dialogue at the highest level results in the General Agreement (Generálna dohoda) between the Government, the Trade Union Confederation and the Federation of Employers' Associations. On the branch level, social dialogue is carried out through collective bargaining. Partners for collective bargaining are the respective employers' union and local trade unions. Collective bargaining on this level results in collective agreement at the master agreement level (CAMAL, kolektívna zmluva vyššieho stupňa). A substantial change of this model of partnership is in the process of discussion between the three partners. The Tripartite Act will be replaced by new legislation replacing the CESA by the Council of Economic and Social Partnership as a standing consultative committee of the Government. Employers and employees do not insist on backing the social partnership by a specific act but do not consider the advisory role proposed by the Government as an appropriate basis for social dialogue.

Although social partners may participate in decision-making processes in curriculum development, education standards establishment and on qualification exams, their role in VET is primarily that of advisors to the state administration as visible from the following table.

LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL PARTNERS	TYPE OF ROLE (ADVISORY/DECISION-MAKING, DIRECT/INDIRECT)
NATIONAL LEVEL	Council of Economic and Social Agreement (CESA)	decision-making till November 2004*
	Council of the Minister of Education for VET (Rada Ministra školstva SR pre OVP)	advisory
	14 tripartite sectoral expert commissions for secondary VET education	Advisory in curriculum development and setting of standards
REGIONAL LEVEL	VET councils in the process of being established	advisory
SECTORAL LEVEL	According to the result of social dialogue (collective agreement at the master agreement level)	depending on agreement

ENTERPRISE LEVEL	According to the result of social dialogue (collective agreement (kolektívna zmluva))	depending on agreement
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* Since December 2004 new status will be agreed, in practice CESA did not influence LLL/VET issues substantially.

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

Education System in Slovakia

The concept of the current education and training system is still based on a socio-economic reflection of the society from the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s. Since the 1976 school reform, three streams of secondary education were precisely defined. A general academic stream was represented by the grammar school (GS, gymnázium), and two vocational streams represented by the specialised secondary school (SSS, stredná odborná škola) and the secondary vocational school (SVS, stredné odborné učilište). Secondary education followed 8-year basic school study, which was prolonged to 9 years in the late 1990s, returning to the length of basic school (BS, základná škola) from the early 1970s. Consequently the path leading to the ISCED 3 level of education is one year longer.

Kindergarten (materská škola) provides pre-school education for children from 2 to 6 years of age and prepares them for compulsory school attendance. Therefore, the enrolment of children of at least 5 years of age is strongly recommended. Due to the severe population decline, there is enough room even in the reduced number of facilities. The resulting competition for students has encouraged teaching staffs to think of how to attract as many children as possible; as a consequence, kindergartens are currently considered the most innovative segment among formal education institutions.

Basic school (BS, základná škola) is composed of the first stage (primary) with grades 1-4 and the second stage (lower secondary) with grades 5-9. In the early 2000s, one third of all basic schools were restricted and providing primary education only, usually in classes with pupils of more than one grade. They are typical for rural and hilly territories and/or ethnically mixed regions. They often provide instruction in minority languages. A total of 30% of the population is scattered among villages, which have less than 2 000 inhabitants. Therefore, discussion about closing these comparably very expensive schools has created a sensitive agenda.

Children are expected to enter school upon reaching the age of 6. They could be enrolled earlier or later according to the wishes of the parents and based on the advice of a counsellor and the results of a test on the child's maturity.

Instruction is provided by class teachers (sometimes, except for specialised lessons predominantly in Arts and Physical training) on the primary level and by teachers typically with double specialisation (e.g. Mathematics and Physics) on the lower secondary level. Science is taught within separated subjects (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Geography). Technical education offered one hour weekly within mainstram format of curricula for Grades 5 to 9 is the first specialised VET subject.

Since the 1998/1999 school year all students leave the basic school after completion of the 9th grade, except for those who transfer to eight year grammar schools (typically after the 4th grade), or marginal low achievers. The latter leave after 10 years of compulsory education before completing the 9th grade, including the repetition of some of grades. Until the 1998/1999 school year basic schools were in the process of expanding from 8 grades (based on legislation valid from 1976 to 1990) to 9 grades (in accordance with act No. 171/1990). This process heavily contributed to the decrease of the readability of statistical data of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

After completion of basic school, students, typically at the age of 15, decide to attend secondary school. As the minimum length of compulsory education is fixed at 10 years, this requirement is typically completed after the first year of secondary school. The end of compulsory education is not certified. It is expected that everyone, except for extremely low achievers, will finish at least a 3-year ISCED 3C education to obtain a certificate of apprenticeship (výučný list), which, under Slovak legislative terminology is described as the fulfilment of "secondary vocational education" (stredné odborné vzdelanie). Those VET students who finish 4 or 5-year ISCED 3A courses with a "maturita" school leaving certificate (maturitné vysvedcenie) are considered to have achieved a "complete secondary vocational education" (úplné stredné odborné vzdelanie).

These unlucky terms often lead to confusion in international comparisons: Those students who do not achieve "complete vocational education" (ISCED 3A) might however complete "secondary vocational education" being able to finish a 3-year course and achieve a ISCED 3C education. It would be misleading to consider those not having the "maturita" certificate as having not "completed" secondary vocational education

Of the two vocational streams, secondary vocational schools predominantly aimed at blue-collar professional training were shown preference by the state and the communist party as schools expected to prepare loyal productive workers and technical intelligentsia. Students were employed by enterprises and, in contrast to other secondary schools, they were offered financial bonuses. Generous expenditures in the 1970s and early 1980s supported by the enterprise sphere enabled the appearance of new, so-called complex schools, offering school based vocational education ISCED 3C training in addition to the ISCED 3A type. The provision of ISCED 3A programmes was looked upon with scepticism by other secondary schools as well as higher education institutions because graduates of this programme were relatively less successful at higher education. On the other hand, ISCED 3A programmes at SVS provided more practical education and training than ISCED 3A programmes at SSS. Changes after 1989 affected SVS more than SSS. With the fall of communism, SVS not only lost their social and political status, but also their economic base, in particular those linked to industry. Enterprises facing restructuring and privatisation were no longer able to employ students. In order to prevent the SVS network from collapsing, the state took over the responsibility for financing all SVS students, which the enterprises declined to do, and SVS were taken away from enterprises. The establishing function was given to the respective ministries administering the particular branch of industry to which the enterprise with its vocational school belonged. Finally, SVS lost almost all contact with enterprises and both types, SSS and SVS, together with grammar schools are at the present time established by regional authorities. Links to enterprises are to be revitalised and in some sectors have already been carried out (e.g. in the economically strongest sector of the automotive industry). In addition, a convergence of SSS and SVS has resulted from the decline of the population. The Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) promotes merging of schools also by fiscal instruments (financing per capita), which makes establishers positive towards the reduction of the network of schools. Associated secondary schools (združené stredné školy) representing merged SSS and SVS are now officially recognised by law.

The alternative to VET schools is the grammar school (GS, gymnázium). It is a very demanding general educational institution aimed at deepening the students' theoretical knowledge and academic skills, and considered the best preparatory program for university studies. The course of study ends with a school leaving examination "maturita" which is an obligatory precondition for admission into higher education. The standard GS course of study lasts at least 4 years and at most 8 years (for pupils completing Grade 4 or exceptionally Grade 5 of BS). It was originally aimed at pupils considered as exceptionally academically gifted. Currently it predominantly attracts parents who expect a better academic environment and/or prefer bypassing the rigorous secondary school admission procedure after the completion of basic school.

The five-year GS (1 year of the specialised language of instruction training followed by 4 years of regular study) offers highly desired bilingual education (English, German,

French, Spanish, Italian) with the instruction and teaching staff partly based/trained on Slovak system curricula and partly on the guarantor-country curricula.

A subsystem of schools for students with special needs also exists. Special needs schools provide education and training to mentally and physically challenged students. Since the early 90s, the trend to integrate students with special needs is increasing. Inclusion efforts are supported by legislation. Despite this fact, these schools continue to play an important role in assisting students with special needs to cope with the demands of society and the labour market.

A special stream of SSS and SVS for students with special needs is also worth mentioning. The curricula in these schools are equivalent to mainstream schools, however, adjusted to the special needs of the students. As of 15th September 2003 there were 5 SSS (with 258 students, 51 full-time teachers and 2 part-time teachers) and 11 SVS (with 676 students, 91 full-time teachers and 15 part-time teachers) offering secondary education and 42 vocational schools (with 3 916 pupils, 258 full-time teachers and 27 part-time teachers) for mentally challenged students. The latter are not considered secondary schools. They provide for training with three levels of training designation: trained, fully trained, and trained with qualification. Finally, there are 25 practical schools (with 327 pupils, 70 full-time teachers and 4 part-time teachers) for those unable to enter vocational training; graduates are expected to perform simple work in households and/or sheltered workshops.

The formal education system is completed with a set of specialised facilities providing specialised assistance to schools, parents and students (e.g. School Service Centres, School Catering Facilities, School Clubs, Centres of Leisure, Youth Centres, In-Country Schools, Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling Centres) and offering additional specialised education (e.g. Language Schools, etc.). Basic schools of arts are state subsidised institutions offering paid education (with rather symbolic fees) in music, dance, fine arts, and drama for gifted and/or motivated children and adults affecting a total of 98 395 students in 2003. Centres of practical training (strediská praktického vyučovania) provide for the practical training of students who receive theoretical education at SVS without the full option of school based practical training.

The numbers and types of secondary schools and centres of practical training are contained in the following table.

Number of secondary schools* in the school year 2003/2004		
TYPE OF SCHOOL		NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
GRAMMAR SCHOOLS	State (public)	158
	Private	19
	Church-affiliated	46
SECONDARY SPECIALISED SCHOOLS	State (public)	238
	Private	32

	Church-affiliated	11
SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS	State (public)	193
	Private	15
	Church-affiliated	5
ASSOCIATED SECONDARY SCHOOLS	State (public)	88
	Private	1
	Church-affiliated	0
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**	State (public)	54
	Private	0
	Church-affiliated	0
CENTRES OF PRACTICAL TRAINING	State (public)	27
	Private	6
	Church-affiliated	0
SCHOOLS AND CENTRES TOTAL	State (public)	758
	Private	73
	Church-affiliated	62
TOTAL		893

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva)

0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

There are no “regular” VET schools on any level lower than ISCED 3 in the Slovak Republic. Nevertheless, there is a specific school, the so-called vocational school (VS, učilište), affiliated with the secondary vocational schools (SVS, stredné odborné učilištia) and making use of the premises of SVS. VS typically provide 2-year training courses with specially adjusted curricula for marginal low achievers from basic schools. This programme is rated as level ISCED 2C, though it is offered to students of mainstream upper secondary education age. The official document on the completion of education within programmes with specially adjusted curricula is a final exam certificate and a special kind of certificate of apprenticeship.

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

Students typically enter upper secondary VET at the age of 15 after completing a 9-years basic school (BS, základná škola). Entry requirements are set by schools, however within procedural framework stipulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva). The supply/demand ratio influences the level of difficulty of the entrance exams; exams may not even be required.

There are two types of educational programmes: study branch (študijný odbor) and training branch (ucebný odbor).

Study branches finish with “maturita” exam (maturitná skúška) and provide ISCED 3A education. The official document on the completion of education is a “maturita” school leaving certificate (vysvedcenie o maturitnej skúške). The length of study is usually 4 years, and sometimes 5 years.

Training branches finish with a final exam (záverečná skúška) and provide ISCED 3C education. The official document on completion of education is a final exam certificate (vysvedcenie o záverečnej skúške) and a certificate of apprenticeship (výučný list). The typical length of study is 3 years.

Students interested in VET traditionally choose between two kinds of schools, the predominantly theoretically based secondary specialised school (SSS, stredná odborná škola) and the predominantly practically based secondary vocational school (SVS, stredné odborné učilište).

SSS traditionally provide for ISCED 3A, occasionally ISCED 3C, and in special cases, post-secondary education, which is content-related rated as ISCED 4, and 5B.

SSS represent a variety of schools preparing students for both higher education and/or the labour market in professions requiring a good quality general and professional education with a firm grounding in theory. In SSS, general subjects represent 42 to 45% of the instruction time. VET subjects represent 55 to 58% of the instruction time, out of which 25-30% is practical training.

According to § 2 (2) of the Ministry of Education Decree No 80/1991 Coll. on secondary schools (Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva c. 80/1991 Zb. o stredných školách), as amended, SSS consist of the following types of schools: secondary industrial schools, secondary geodetic schools, secondary agricultural schools, secondary forestry schools, secondary horticultural schools, secondary wine-and-fruit-growing schools, secondary health schools, commercial schools, commercial academies, hotel academies, social-law academies, schools of library and information studies, secondary pedagogical schools, specialised schools for girls, schools of applied art, conservatories, dance conservatories, secondary schools of art, and specialised schools.

There are several types of secondary industrial schools whose specialisations are indicated in their names, e.g. secondary industrial schools “of machinery”, “of construction”, etc.), all typically offering 4-year courses of study finishing with a “maturita” and often considered a preparatory for subsequent education at specific

faculties of the technical university. Specialised schools for girls aimed at dealing with society and social issues, but not firm academic education came back into the system in the early 1990s, however without success. Conservatories are a special case, closer to non-university tertiary education offering a 4-year course of study, and 6 and 8 years-courses of study finishing with an “absolutorium” (ISCED 5B rated with regard to the content). SSS very marginally offer ISCED 3C courses.

SVS could provide for VET in ISCED 3C training branches and 3A study branches. SVS represent the vocational stream of training for workers. In ISCED 3A branch curricula, general subjects represent 25 to 50% of the instruction time. VET subjects represent 50 to 75% of the instruction time, out of which 35 to 40% is practical training. In ISCED 3C branches general subjects represent 20 to 40% of the instruction time; VET subjects 60 to 80% of the instruction time, out of which 50% is practical training. Vocational schools (ucilištia) affiliated to SVS and making use of SVS premises are oriented toward low demanding professions and pupils with learning difficulties and who usually did not succeed in completing the full 9 grades of ES.

There are several types of secondary vocational schools whose specialisation are indicated in their names, e.g. secondary vocational schools “of agriculture”, “of chemistry”, “of construction“, “of food processing”, “of machinery“, etc.).

Training branch graduates (ISCED 3C) are qualified workers. They are not eligible for tertiary education. Due to the low absorption of the labour market and the higher social status of the “maturita” school leaving certificate, they very often apply for a two years post-graduate programme ending with a “maturita” exam. Study branch graduates (ISCED 3A) from SVS are allowed to apply for higher education although they are trained for the labour market rather than for higher education (in contrast to the similar educational programme at SSS). The share of students of study branches (ISCED 3A) is gradually increasing. Nevertheless, in comparison with grammar school (gymnázium) and SSS graduates, it is more difficult for SVS ISCED 3A graduates to pass an admission test or graduate from technical universities. In fact, because they are not oriented to a strict academic career, they are victims together with some graduates of SSS of the gap in the system. Diversification within tertiary education has yet to come about, however, a window has been opened for non-university and short track professional education by Higher Education Act. No 131/2002 Coll.

Officially approved study and training branches are annexed to Ministry of Education Decree No. 80/1991 Coll. on Secondary Schools, as amended, and the current register, annually updated, is maintained by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Inštitút informácií a prognóz školstva).

Study programmes at SVS and SSS in the school year 2003/2004

AREA OF STUDY	SPECIALISATIONS AND SUB-SPECIALISATIONS		
	SVS	SSS	TOTAL
PHYSICS AND MATHEMATICS	-	1	1
MINING AND MINING GEOLOGY	5	17	22
METALLURGY	11	16	27

ENGINEERING AND OTHER METAL-PROCESSING	2	31	33
ENGINEERING AND OTHER METAL-PROCESSING (SVS)	113	-	113
ELECTROTECHNICS	66	46	112
TECHNICAL CHEMISTRY OF SILICATE CHEMISTRY	52	10	62
TECHNICAL CHEMISTRY (W/O SILICATE CHEMISTRY)	51	25	76
FOOD-PROCESSING	36	22	58
TEXTILE AND CLOTHING	48	17	65
PROCESSING OF HIDES, PLASTICS, RUBBER, SHOES PRODUCTION	30	4	34
WOOD-PROCESSING AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PRODUCTION	36	13	49
PULP, PAPER PROCESSING AND PRINTING	21	4	25
BUILDING, GEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND CARTOGRAPHY	44	35	79
TRANSPORT, POST AND TELECOMMUNICATION	36	35	71
SPECIAL TECHNICAL SPECIALISATIONS	-	20	20
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY	1	89	90
VETERINARY SCIENCES	-	12	12
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY	49	-	49

HEALTHCARE	-	26	26
ECONOMIC SCIENCES	-	1	1
ECONOMICS AND ORGANISATION, RETAIL AND SERVICES	1	50	51
ECONOMICS AND ORGANISATION, RETAIL AND SERVICES (SVS)	60	-	60
LEGAL SCIENCES	-	4	4
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCES	-	12	12
PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES	-	2	2
PEDAGOGY	-	7	7
ARTS, APPLIED ARTS AND FOLK CRAFTS	-	111	111
ARTS, APPLIED ARTS AND FOLK CRAFTS (SVS)	57	-	57
SECURITY SERVICES	-	9	9
NON-STATE SECURITY SERVICES	-	2	2
SECONDARY SCHOOL MILITARY BRANCHES	-	23	23
TOTAL	719	644	1363

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Simplification of the process of the merging of schools contributes to the efficiency of financing education under the current substantial population decrease. Since the 2002/2003 school year, the merging of schools was stimulated and associated secondary schools (združené stredné školy) appeared as a new name among secondary schools. First of all, however, this is a welcome administrative change enabling the association of secondary specialised and secondary vocational schools, often located in the same building under the same management.

Slovakia (78%) and the Czech Republic (80%) lead the EU countries in the share of students in upper secondary education enrolled in VET programmes (Eurostat, 2000). The legacy of former Czechoslovakia and the influence of German and Austrian education is still present in the current figures. Educational reform from the 1970s benchmarked SVS enrolment up to 60%, SSS up to 25% and GS up to 15%. Within current reform efforts there are voices to increase the enrolment in GS up to 35% backed by the officially approved reform strategy: the National Programme of Upbringing and Education for the Next 15 to 20 Years (Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov).

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

There is no typical apprenticeship training in Slovakia and there are no apprentices, although ISCED 3C students from secondary vocational schools (SVS, stredné odborné učilištia) are often considered and called apprentices. They are regular secondary school students, according to the law, and as a rule, with no contract with employers. Their practical training is usually school based. Even if organised outside the school, in centres (or workplaces) of practical training, it is ensured by a contract between the school with the provider. Nevertheless, students may be educated for individuals and legal entities at SVS in theory, receiving practical training at the workplace of this entity. This is however a marginal case, permanently below 1% in contrast to the 1980s, when SVS students were under contract with an organisation co-financing their training and offering students pocket money.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Slovakia is among the countries with the lowest number of dropouts and early school leavers. Nevertheless, this is not true for the Roma minority, in particular the Roma population living in segregated settlements. Specific intervention programmes are carried out by NGOs in co-operation with labour offices and/or assisted by international partners: a second chance schools pilot project has started in Košice and a pilot alphabetisation project is under way in Lucenec.

The PHARE sponsored Roma Educational Centre (Rómske vzdelávacie centrum), an integral part of the Methodological and Pedagogical Centre in Prešov (Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove), is aimed at supporting the effective education of the Roma minority and includes the provision of advisory services for teachers at schools with a high Roma concentration in order to retain young Roma in education and training.

As a first step, specific pre-vocational education and training must be developed, in order to achieve a better qualification structure within the Roma population. Mainstream basic schools (základné školy), despite constant reminders by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) about the responsibility of pedagogical staff to provide individual intervention services for Roma minority pupils, often fail to do so.

Vocational schools (ucilištia), affiliated with the secondary vocational schools (stredné odborné učilištia) should be considered an intervention programme rather than a brick and mortar institution with regular students. Although officially indicated in the statistics, vocational school students are low achievers with learning difficulties or social disabilities enrolled in a less demanding educational programme and based on officially adjusted curricula.

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

Traditionally, there are two types of post-secondary non-tertiary programmes in Slovakia.

Follow-up programmes are offered to ISCED 3C graduates from secondary vocational schools (SVS, stredné odborné učilištia). As a rule, the course of study lasts two years and finishes with a matura examination certifying an ISCED 3A level of education. This kind of programme is offered to adults of all ages as a part time study. Quite often, 18-year old graduates of ISCED 3C programmes enter this programme in full-time study immediately after finishing the ISCED 3C programme.

Post-maturita programmes (full-time and part time) are offered in three forms:

- refresher programmes;
- specialising programmes;
- qualifying programmes.

Refresher programmes are of at least 6 months in length and are completed by a final exam. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. The programmes are aimed at the updating of previously acquired knowledge and skills.

Specialising programmes are of at least 1 year in length and completed by an absolutorium. These studies are rated as an ISCED 5B level of education. The programmes are aimed at acquiring new specific knowledge and skills usually related to the previously received education and training.

Qualifying programmes are of at least one year in length and completed by a maturita examination. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. These programmes are aimed at gaining additional qualification.

In all these cases ISCED codes are assigned by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva) with regard to the content and exit procedure of the programmes. There is no legislative backing for this rating. Refresher programmes and qualifying programmes are certified at the same level of education as ISCED 3A certificates according to Slovak legislation.

However, even specialising programmes certified at ICSED 5B are not recognised as tertiary education, according to the Slovak legislation.

There is also a specific type of education, the so-called complementary pedagogical study (doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium), aimed at acquiring pedagogical qualification for trainers. These studies for ISCED 3C students wishing to serve as trainers at SVS or centres of practical training are rated as an ISCED 4C level of education.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

All Slovak higher education institutions were expected to provide university type education in accordance with Act No 172/1990 Coll. on Higher Education. Within the new Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll., it is proposed to allow for the existence of non-university education and non-research based tertiary education. Short track tertiary education should be promoted in order to change the attitude of the population of graduates of secondary schools that usually consider it as uncompleted master study. Currently, the master study in Slovakia usually lasts 5 years, and sometimes 4, or 6 years. Bachelor studies lasting three years have limited popularity, partly due to the fact that tertiary education is free. All higher education institutions have reshaped their studies to a three-cycle model: with bachelor, master and doctoral studies in order to be compatible with the Bologna declaration.

Currently there are 19 public universities, 2 private universities (one higher school of management and one higher school of health and social work) and 4 state universities (two military academies already in the process of restructuring, the police academy; and the former institute of post-graduate studies in the health sector have been transformed into the university). In addition to the two traditional universities in Bratislava and Košice, new universities have emerged around teacher training colleges in many regional seats. Traditional VET providers are the technical universities in Bratislava and Košice (Slovenská technická univerzita v Bratislave, Technická univerzita v Košiciach) and the University of Economics in Bratislava (Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave). Besides these institutions, new technical universities have emerged from branch higher educational institutions; for example, the Technical University of Zvolen (Technická univerzita vo Zvolene) was previously the higher school of forestry. The current network of universities is considered too large with only nine universities with more than 9 000 students in the 2003/2004 academic year. The friendly merging of universities is promoted by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) but there is no instrument for making the network more efficient.

In 2002, the Catholic university in Ružomberok (Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku) offering Catholic religion-based education and in 2004 Selye University in Komárno (Univerzita J. Selyeho v Komárne) serving the Hungarian minority in Hungarian as the language of instruction, were established. New private universities predominantly aimed at lucrative study programmes (e.g. law and management) are in the process of accreditation.

05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

0501 - BACKGROUND AND MAIN TYPES OF CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

There is a long tradition of adult education in Slovakia, however, with a focus on serving adult learners' personal interests rather than increasing their employability. Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) was provided predominantly at training centres linked to enterprises and branch industries. In the early 1990s the two systems - adult education and CVET, underwent dramatic changes. Sectoral industry-affiliated CVET centres closed down or after privatisation, widened their scope of services beyond education and training. Similarly, traditional adult providers started to operate as any other private body offering education and training demanded by the market. Many new players established under diverse legislation such as the Trade Code (Obchodný zákonník), the Act on Foundations (Zákon onadáciách), the Act on Associations of Citizens (Zákon o združovaní občanov), the Trade Licensing Act (Zákon o živnostenskom podnikaní) emerged. The latter act considers the provision of training as a free trade and when filing for registration, no professional qualification and experience is requested. As a consequence, many small free trade license holders nominally involved in education and training do not provide this kind of services. Current estimations of the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) indicate about 3 000 entities with registered educational services; however only about 1 500, including schools, deliver education and training actively. The largest from the non-state training institutions and the only one with a regional network is Academy of Education (Akadémia vzdelávania) with centres in 36 cities spread over the whole country. With progressing restructuring and an inflow of strategic investors, enterprise-based education and training has revived, predominantly based on the company culture of the investor.

Higher education institutions gradually expand their provision of education and training for inhabitants under the umbrella of lifelong learning deriving from the study programmes of their faculties. Institutionalised centres of lifelong learning or continuing education have been established at several universities.

From the supply point of view there are:

- programmes of education and training providers focused on all inhabitants, including the unemployed, provided they are accredited by the Ministry of Education and selected by the regional labour office;
- programmes of educational institutions and educational institution-affiliated organisations focused on inhabitants looking to acquire qualification; and
- enterprise-affiliated training activities focused on employees.

The latter are insufficiently researched. Slovakia did not participate in the CVTS 2 international continuing vocational training survey.

In February 2004 the government adopted the Concept of Lifelong Learning reflecting the EU Memorandum of Lifelong Learning and Making the European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality and national policy papers The National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the SR for the Next 15 to 20 Years (Národný program výchovy a

vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov), adopted 2001; The Concept for Further Development of Higher Education in Slovakia for the 21st Century (Konceptia ďalšieho rozvoja vysokého školstva na Slovensku pre 21. storočie); adopted 2000, The Concept of Further Education in Slovakia (Konceptia ďalšieho vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike), adopted 2002, as well as The National Action Plan of Employment 2002 and 2003 (Národný akčný plán zamestnanosti na roky 2002-2003); and The National Development Plan (Národný rozvojový plán), the 2003 version. As a consequence of this document, the tripartite Council of the Minister of Education SR (Rada ministra školstva SR pre celoživotné vzdelávanie) for LLL has been established and regional councils are in the process of being established. The national strategy for LLL till the 2015 is under preparation. Currently, Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources (Sektorový operatívny program Ľudské zdroje) and the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 (Jednotný programový dokument NUTS II Bratislava cieľ 3) measures replace this document and represent the implementation of lifelong learning policies in practice (see also 1101).

ESF National project No III Education and Training (Vzdelávanie a príprava pre trh práce) of the Unemployed for the Labour Market implemented by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (CLSAF, Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) since autumn 2004 is aimed at providing training for targeted populations in individual regions. Unemployed individuals eligible for training are from the following groups: low qualified (ISCED 2 and less), the long term unemployed (12 months plus), citizens up to 25 years of age, citizens over 50 years of age, single parents, the disabled, Roma and others at risk of social exclusion. Preferred target groups are as follows: unskilled individuals, individuals without employment experience, the functionally illiterate and individuals from sectors undergoing restructuring. Training offered to identified groups must be in accordance with the specific CLSAF Regional Training Plans.

0502 - PLANNING AND ORGANISATION OF LEARNING

In contrast to initial VET, there is no obligatory provision of continuing VET. In all items of legislation CVET is considered an option or possibility. There are no measures that guarantee education and training in terms of number of days and there is no financial scheme guaranteeing the support of delivery of education and training.

Although CVET is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva), two of the three fundamental acts pertain to the sector of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny). Act No 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (Zákon č. 386/1997 Z.z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní) elaborated by the Ministry of Education provides the general institutional framework while Act No 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (Zákon č. 5/2004 Z.z. o službách zamestnanosti) stipulates instruments of active labour market policy including labour market training provisions, and Act No 311/2001, of the Labour Code (Zákon č. 311/2001 Z.z. Zákonník práce) regulates employers' and employees' responsibility for upgrading skills.

According to Act No 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education, continuing vocational education and training has become a legitimate part of the education system of the Slovak Republic. Everyone, regardless of age and education, has the right to continue his/her education in accordance with his/her abilities and interests. The act specifies the establishment of continuing training institutions, conditions of accreditation, issuance of certificates of completed training, etc. However, no mandatory sources for financing continuing training have been identified. Sources that could be earmarked for financing training are listed, but this is just a demarcation of financing possibilities and no funds are secured and no incentives for allocation of own means towards companies and individuals have been set. Thus, the declarative essence of the law simply provides for the institutional backing of the establishment of educational institutions and their activities.

§§ 44-48 of the Act on Employment Services stipulate the provision of labour market training distinguishing between job seekers, people interested in employment, and employees. Education and training is offered within the National Programme of

Education and Training for the Labour Market (Národný program vzdelávania a prípravy pre trh práce) elaborated and implemented by the employment services headquarters of the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) and/or by regional offices, according to identified regional priorities (which should be included in the comprehensive Regional Training Plan) and through training providers selected by public procurement. Regional Offices according to § 46(2) may “by written agreement refund up to 100% of the costs of education and training for the labour market of the job seeker and up to 50% of the costs of education and training of the person interested in employment to the service supplier”, and according to § 47(5) the office may grant contributions of “up to 90% of the justified costs of the employee’s education and training ... if upon their completion the employer continues employing him/her for at least 12 months, or when the employee’s education ... is being organised within measures toward precluding or restricting collective redundancy”.

If the learning, upgrading of skills or qualification improvement is for the needs of the employee, if there are no operational reasons or any other reservations on the side of the employer, the employer is to free the employee for the time necessary for the training without providing wage compensation. Expenses connected to learning and training are to be paid by the employee. According to § 153 of the Labour Code, an employer “shall attend to deepening the employees’ qualification, or to its increase ... the employer shall with trade unions negotiate measures aimed at attending to employees qualification, their deepening and increase”. Furthermore, according to § 155(1) the employer can make a written agreement with the employee enabling “the employee to participate in part-time study in order to enhance his/her qualification and the employer can provide him/her time off with wage compensation; but the employee is obliged to remain with the employer after completion of the study for the agreed time or to pay back the costs...”. The act obliges the employer to ensure the upgrading of skills of employees’ only in the case of the newly employed and in the event of a relocation to a new working place and/or new job. On the other hand according to § 154(3) “the employee’s obligation is to constantly upgrade skills for the work agreed in the contract of employment.

Company collective agreements could contain a detailed list of obligations on education/learning. In practice, social partners have different approaches: Learning programmes for individual employees are mainly implemented by large employers, predominantly those with foreign capital. Middle-sized employers occasionally provide education/learning. In small companies learning is usually carried out by recruiting new employees.

In addition to general valid legislation there are specific measures for continuing training within a specific profession, e.g. a pedagogical staff, which is stipulated in detail by decrees of the Ministry of Education, health staffs, diverse financial sector professions, justice professionals and others. The national legislation concerning regulated professions is fully harmonised with EU legislation.

A specific example of the effort to increase the quality and efficiency of training is the Concept for Training in Civil Service (Koncepcia vzdelávania štátnych zamestnancov). This document defines the general framework of civil servant training, the tasks of educational subjects, the objectives of training and training type priorities. The measures for the institutional, financial and personal provision of civil servant training should be implemented in two stages. The first stage is planned for 2003-2004, the second one for 2006-2007. Within both periods the training will predominantly focus on the training of superior officers, the training of civil servants on issues relating to the integration of the Slovak Republic into the EU, and the training of newly hired civil servants. The concept was approved on 28th January 2004 by government resolution No 79/2004.

The most popular training is related to foreign languages, ICT, and office administration, in particular accountancy, which offers a good opportunity for self-employment. In enterprises, besides obligatory training (e.g. safety at work) and specific workplace-related training, soft skills training is in progress, as well as diverse

management training for middle and top management staff. There is no detailed analysis available concerning enterprise-based training.

In 2003, within the programme of individualised employment services the following groups at risk were identified and considered the target group for active labour market policies including labour market training: the long-term unemployed, young people and school graduates, the disabled; citizens over 50 years of age; unemployed Roma; the unemployed with education below the ISCED 2 level; and individuals returning to the labour market after maternity leave.

The Ministry of Education is the central government body responsible for CVET. The CVET section is responsible for state administration in this field through the provision of policy papers (e.g. LLL development strategy until 2015 already in preparation), legislation proposals (including the new LLL Act replacing Further Education Act No 386/97 Coll. to be prepared in 2010), statistics and information system development and consultancy services concerning the CVET system. The section provides for administrative support for the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education (Akreditacná komisia Ministerstva školstva) for the accreditation of educational activities within CVET.

0503 - DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND PROVIDERS

In contrast to statistical data in the initial VET, which has been gathered in the standard way for many years and currently is fully harmonised with UOE standards, available national CVT statistics are not reliable. Although statistical instruments developed by the Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva) have been legislatively anchored since 1996 and CVT providers are obliged by law to provide required data, the response rate is very low. In 2003, the institute addressed 2 932 providers and received a total of 393 positive responses and 156 negative responses. Thus, just some partial data is available. On the other hand, the 393 institutions that responded positively in 2003 are considered the most important players on the market.

The following table offers a distribution of training providers calculated from the positive responses.

Number of educational institutions offering CVT/LLL in 2003 by type/sector						
TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (EI)	EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS		TRAINEES		GRADUATES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	64	16.28	9 147	2.25	8 436	2.72
HIGHER EI	20	5.09	29 605	7.28	13 365	4.30
EI OF STATE ADMINISTRATION BODIES	23	5.85	132 073	32.46	97 704	31.46
EI OF MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES	9	2.29	2 507	0.62	1 401	0.45

EI OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION	6	1.53	1 677	0.41	745	0.24
EI OF CO-OPERATIVES	1	0.25	66	0.02	66	0.02
EI OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS	28	7.12	95 280	23.42	94 958	30.58
EI OF TRADE UNIONS	1	0.25	916	0.23	916	0.29
EI OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES	1	0.25	94	0.02	23	0.01
EI OF ENTITIES FROM CULTURE SECTOR	7	1.78	11 183	2.75	3 038	0.98
EI OF INDIVIDUALS AND LEGAL ENTITIES	174	44.27	78 985	19.41	66 040	21.27
OTHERS	58	14.76	42 225	10.38	23 852	7.68
EI NOT INCLUDED – DATES MISSING	1	0.25	3 119	0.77	-	-
TOTAL	393	100	406 877	100	310 544	100

Source: Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education
About a half of the educational institutions are private and about one third are state-managed institutions, as can be seen from the following table.

Number of educational institutions offering CVT/LLL in 2003 by ownership

OWNERSHIP OF EI	NUMBER OF EI		NUMBER OF TRAINEES		GRADUATES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
NOT AVAILABLE (DATA ARE MISSING)	2	0.51	97	0.02	97	0.03

INTERNATIONAL WITH PUBLIC MAJORITY	3	0.76	177	0.04	82	0.03
PRIVATE DOMESTIC	199	50.64	97 325	23.92	116 357	37.47
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY	4	1.02	163	0.04	163	0.05
STATE	119	30.28	189 058	46.47	79.844	25.71
MUNICIPAL	19	4.83	9 280	2.28	4 419	1.42
ASSOCIATIONS*	44	11.20	103 835	25.52	102 664	33.06
PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL	3	0.76	6942	1.71	6 918	2.23
TOTAL	393	100	283 915	100	310 544	100

Source: Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education
Note: * incl. political parties and churches

The following is the data describing the aforementioned institutions from the networking point of view.

Number of educational institutions offering CVT/LLL in 2003 by form of networking

NETWORK OF EI	NUMBER OF EI		NUMBER OF TRAINEES		GRADUATES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
INDEPENDENT EI, LOCAL OPERATION	127	32.3	43.232	10.6	30 267	9.75
INDEPENDENT EI, R/NW OPERATION	210	53.4	245 096	60.2	167.353	53.89
NETWORK OF EI IN REGIONS (NUTS 3)	16	4.1	10 405	2.6	97 79	3.15

NETWORK OF EI IN EACH DISTRICT (NUTS 4)	12	3.1	90 971	22.4	90 971	29 29
OTHER	28	7.1	17 173	4.2	12 174	3.92
TOTAL	393	100	406 877	100	310 544	100

Source: Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education R/NW - regional/nationwide

It is easy to see from the table above, that there is much room for the restructuring of institutions on the market, in particular for vertical networking. A modest share of institutions spread throughout the country are trying to cover the market as a whole with subsidiaries in all sub-markets (districts). Training institutions with a chain of facilities in various Slovak regions represent some 4% and in every district some 3%.

There are no detailed analyses available concerning programme types as well as the quality of programmes, trainers, working methods, etc. In 2003 according to the aforementioned limited statistical data of the Institute of Information and Prognoses, about 16% of educational activities were aimed at entrepreneurship and administration training; about 15% were related to diverse aspects of the humanities, including soft skills training, 7.5% to computers and slightly more than 7% to health-related topics. Despite criticism, e.g. within the consultation process to the Memorandum on LLL, the quality of service remained unmonitored, unregulated and left up to market forces only.

Furthermore, except for the limited data from research, no data covers the training by enterprises. There are neither annual statistics, nor instruments promising any improvement. Unfortunately, Slovakia did not participate in CVTS 2 survey.

0504 - ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMMES

Although there is a solid provision of CVT/LLL on the market and education is highly valued by the population, the share of adult population in training (4.8% in 2003) is lagging behind the EU25 average (9% in 2003) and 2010 EU benchmark (12.5%).

The reason for this is the low purchasing power of the inhabitants and a lack of capital in a predominant share of companies facing a permanent need of investment in their businesses and mainly in new technology. There are no fiscal incentives for inhabitants or employers to invest in education and training. The government considers the introduction of the flat 19% tax rate a sufficient stimulus for enterprises to invest, leaving the decision about the kind of investment up to them. Nevertheless, a shift from the corporate and personal income tax burden to the consumption taxes and VAT (19% for all goods and services) does not make citizens, in particular those in the most urgent need of education and training, positive towards personal investment in this area. The share of those below the poverty line (individuals living in households with an income less than 60% of the national median income) was 21% in 2002.

The rapidly increasing indebtedness of individuals stimulated by consumption loans aggressively promoted by the banking sector could make the issue of fiscal incentives a hot topic of political discussion in 2005.

Provision of quality distance learning making use of ICT is developing slowly and hampered by a lack of means within the public education sphere; and by the insufficient purchasing power of potential clients concerning private educational institutions. On the other hand, part-time studies at the tertiary level are often organised in the form of distance learning in order to save costs. Distance and lifelong learning centres at universities are the most dedicated promoters of e-learning. On the other hand, there is no legislative backing for the validation and accreditation of prior and experiential learning. This topic is developing into the agenda as a consequence of

the Copenhagen/Maastricht process. However, only limited experience has been collected in this field; mostly within the Leonardo da Vinci projects.

0505 - BRIDGING INITIAL AND POST INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Slovakia is among the top EU countries with its low share of citizens who are poorly educated and high share of citizens with secondary education (13.4% of ISCED 0-2, and 75% of ISCED 3-4 within the population aged 25-64 in 2003). The achievement of education to at least the ISCED 3C level is traditionally considered a minimum level of education. The lowest level of education almost exclusively affects people from socially disadvantaged environments, of which the dominant share hails from the Roma minority. The low qualification level of the Roma minority however has its roots in insufficient general education. Compared to the majority of the population, the Roma dropout rate from lower secondary education and the attendance of schools originally designed for the mentally challenged is significantly higher and creates a dead-end for the achievement of at least ISCED 3C qualifications.

Low achievers from basic schools (základné školy) can only acquire a specific VET qualification for "low demanding blue-collar jobs" in vocational schools (ucilištia) affiliated to secondary vocational schools (SVS). They are not considered graduates of secondary school and the content of their training is equal to an ISCED 2C level of education. Graduates of special basic schools for the mentally challenged are usually considered unlikely to enter the free labour market (they are usually expected to work in sheltered workshops). Nevertheless, Roma students, who are not mentally challenged, are enrolled in these schools due to incorrect decisions of authorities and/or parents, and are currently deprived of the right to adopt qualifications demanded by the labour market. Although the enrolment of Roma in special schools due to a temporary lack of readiness for entering elementary school is in violation of the law and repeatedly criticised by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva), sometimes it is considered as the most pragmatic solution by the parents of these children. In particular, the more than 150 000 ethnic Roma living in over 600 segregated settlements, representing the population (about half of this population are children below 14 years) almost fully dependent on social benefits are unable to create appropriate study conditions for their children to enrol in mainstream schools. These children, often with a limited command of the language (Slovak or Hungarian), are at risk of dropping out of basic school or being enrolled later into a special basic school. In order to combat the low qualification attainment level of the Roma minority, diverse governmental programmes have been set in motion and are backed by policy documents, such as the Priorities of the Government of the SR towards Roma Communities for 2002 (Priority vlády SR vo vzťahu k rómskym komunitám na rok 2002), the Fundamental Theses of Policies of the Government of SR Concerning Integration of Roma Communities (Základné tézy koncepcie politiky vlády SR v integrácii rómskych komunit), approved by the government in 2003, and the Concept of Integrated Education of Roma Children and Youth, Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education (Koncepcia integrovaného vzdelávania rómskych detí a mládeže, vrátane rozvoja stredoškolského a vysokoškolského vzdelávania), approved by Government Resolution No 498/2004 of 26th May 2004, and financially supported by PHARE and ESF. The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2004-2006 (Národný akčný plán sociálnej inklúzie 2004 – 2006) also addresses the need to improve the access of the Roma minority to education.

The most important challenge concerns the need to adjust basic schools to the specific needs of Roma students. School Act No 29/1984 Coll. (Zákon c. 29/1984 Zb. o sústave základných a stredných škôl (školský zákon) as amended in 2002 enabled the establishment of zero grades at primary schools and the introduction of teacher assistants for Roma pupils in order to facilitate interaction between the mainstream school environment and the Roma-specific culture. The main aim of the PHARE 2002-2005 project entitled Further Integration of Roma Children in the Field of Education and Improved Living Conditions (Ďalšia integrácia rómskych detí v oblasti výchovy a vzdelávania a zlepšenie životných podmienok) is to increase the integration of Roma children into the standard system of education. The aim of the PHARE 2003-2006 project entitled Support for the Further Integration of Roma People in the Field of

Upbringing and Education (Podpora ďalšej integrácie Rómov v oblasti výchovy a vzdelávania) is the elaboration of a specific training programme and tutelage to assist Roma children in the last two years of lower secondary education in preparation for further education at secondary schools. The Support Programme for Roma Students of Secondary Schools and Universities (Program podpory rómskych žiakov stredných a vysokých škôl) is the specific instrument of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities (Úrad splnomocnenkyne vlády SR pre rómske komunity) for providing scholarships for gifted Roma students from socially disadvantaged environments.

The second chance schools should also target exactly the population with levels of education lower than ISCED 2. Maybe due to the comparable low rate of poorly educated, the second chance schools are insufficiently supported by the education authorities in Slovakia. In the early 2000s the first efforts were visible in Košice, in eastern Slovakia, where the second chance schools are promoted by non-governmental activists based on the French and Dutch experience and supported by Academia Istropolitana (the Ministry of Education agency) and the Methodological and Pedagogical Centre in Prešov (Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove).

The Roma Educational Centre (Rómske vzdelávacie centrum) in Prešov affiliated to the Methodological and Pedagogical Centre in Prešov should provide educational, information, documentary, counselling and consultation services for Roma and to educators involved in the education and training of Roma.

Slovakia's initial education system is secondary education-focused. Almost everyone can acquire an ISCED 3 level of education with an increasing share moving up to the ISCED 3A level. Follow-up studies for ISCED 3C graduates are booming in both full-time and part-time forms. As a consequence of the declining population, secondary schools threatened with closure are very active in attracting citizens with ISCED 3C levels of education to acquire the ISCED 3A level of education, which entitles graduates to apply to institutions of tertiary education. The current bottleneck in the Slovak education system is the low enrolment in higher education as a consequence of low university capacities and the lack of a non-university tertiary education programmes providing short track customised studies. There is a limited offer of tertiary part-time studies for adults willing to adjust to labour market needs. Higher education institutions predominantly offer only accredited qualification programmes derived from their full-time programmes in part-time form.

0506 - RE-EDUCATION AND RE-TRAINING NEEDS DUE TO LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENTS AND MOBILITY

Training for the unemployed is not considered an efficient tool for fighting unemployment as a consequence of the high dead weight and low absorption of the labour market. Available means were consumed by unemployment benefits, and the remaining limited means were preferably aimed at specific "pro-active incentives" benefiting the unemployed for active job seeking. Since 2004, an activation bonus is also provided to those in re-training. Re-training policies are systematically regulated by the National Programme of Education and Training for the Labour Market (Národný program vzdelávania a prípravy pre trh práce) and elaborated and implemented by employment services headquarters - the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny). Regional labour offices may organise specific courses according to identified regional priorities. New opportunities and means offered by ESF provide more room for targeted re-training.

ESF National project No IX School Graduates Practice (Absolventská prax) implemented by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family since autumn 2004 is aimed at creating training-at-workplaces for 2 300 school graduates without any employment experience and 1 700 unemployed individuals up to 25 years of age in order to better adjust the skills of school graduates to specific labour needs.

Nevertheless, the lack of ability and experience in the early identification of skill needs as well as the pending restructuring of regional economies make the efficiency of specific professional re-training questionable. It is hoped that the establishment of regional lifelong learning councils will bring about closer co-operation between regional

authorities, education and training providers and different trades and businesses. With the high unemployment rate and the slowly reviving rate of job creation, except in the automotive industry, there are however no signals expected for specific professions related to education and re-training in regions lacking foreign investment. Specific training in the support of self-employment and the programme of loans for unemployed wishing to start business should make self-employment more attractive.

The training needs of small and medium-sized enterprises and small entrepreneurs are not yet sufficiently known. With increasing stability and the continued high growth of the national economy, a new market could soon emerge. National and regional authorities therefore face the urgent need to reinforce efforts to adopt efficient know how for identifying skill needs and for the adoption of quality assurance system for education and training.

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

0601 - GENERAL BACKGROUND

Similar to other European countries, Slovakia's pedagogical staff is ageing despite the very high supply of teacher training graduates. Student teachers are not interested in entering the teaching profession because of the low salaries. Despite political declarations on the crucial importance of education and the need to increase the status of teachers from all political parties, nothing has been done except a single measure providing for low interest housing loans and a modest increase in starting salaries (about EUR 40 per month) effective since 2005. Low remuneration strengthens the tendency to consider education as just a secondary option for those failing to find better jobs. Ageing, an increase in non-qualified educators, continuing feminisation, and the tendency toward career fluctuation among young educators are the most significant features. At the same time teachers and trainers already in service face the risk of unemployment due to the significant population decrease. After reductions in pre-school education institutions and basic schools the outflow has hit the secondary schools, whose capacities might be reduced by one third. The new model of financing based on per capita contributions pushes municipalities and regions to close down small schools and to favour large schools with lower unit costs. As a consequence, a specific situation exists in human resource management at schools. In general, there are enough qualified teachers in Slovakia despite the increasing number of unqualified teachers in service. Schools face a shortage of teachers of English (other foreign language teachers might face unemployment) and ICT skilled teachers including IT teachers, as these groups are able to find better jobs outside the education sector. In VET schools, in addition to these teachers, there is a problem with quality teachers of vocational subjects and trainers experienced in new technologies.

The National Programme of Upbringing and Education for the Next 15-20 Years (Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov) has commented on the shortcomings explicitly, stating: "The insufficient valuing of the work of teachers and tutors as well as the unsatisfactory financing of education have resulted in a critical situation for education in the Slovak Republic ... unqualified teachers teach up to 34.78% of the lessons at basic and secondary schools."

Many very capable educators who might have acted as valuable innovators in schools, have left the education sector, finding other opportunities offered due to socio-economic changes. With regard to the brain drain outside the education sector and the country, the loss of entrepreneurial individuals is the most sensitive.

The next periodical survey on the pedagogical staff in basic schools (základné školy) and secondary schools (stredné školy) is planned for 2005. Thus the last in-depth statistical analyses refer to the year 2001. The average age of teachers in VET schools in 2001 was 42.0 (women 41.3, men 44.8). More detailed data on teachers and other educators in VET are shown in the following table.

Average age of educators (total, female, male) in VET (as of 27th April 2001)

EDUCATORS		SSS	SVS AND VS	CPT
TEACHERS	TOTAL	43.5	43.9	-
	FEMALE	42.1	42.2	-
	MALE	46.5	46.8	-
TRAINERS	TOTAL	47.6	44.2	44.2
	FEMALE	44.9	41.7	42.9
	MALE	52.5	46.0	45.8
SPORT INSTRUCTORS	TOTAL	50.5	43.0	-
	FEMALE	-	37.0	-
	MALE	50.5	43.2	-
TUTORS	TOTAL	45.8	45.7	37.6
	FEMALE	45.3	44.7	37.6
	MALE	47.1	47.6	-
OTHERS	TOTAL	51	48	-
	FEMALE	46.4	46.1	-
	MALE	53.9	49.4	-

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva)

SSS – secondary specialised school, SVS – secondary vocational school, VS - vocational school,

CPT – centre of practical training providing for practical training outside the school

The following tables show teachers in VET broken down by age groups and by years of practice.

Teachers in VET schools by age groups (as of 27 th April 2001)			
AGE GROUP		SSS	SVS AND VS
- 25	N	442	233
	%	3.7	2.9
26 – 30	N	1 308	706
	%	10.9	8.9
31 – 35	N	1 276	738
	%	10.6	9.3
36 – 40	N	1 608	1 073
	%	13.4	13.5
41 – 45	N	2 058	1 715
	%	17.2	21.6
46 – 50	N	2 044	1 381
	%	17.1	17.4
51 – 55	N	1 600	1 036
	%	13.4	13.0
56 – 60	N	1 075	717
	%	9.0	9.0

61+	N	572	348
	%	4.8	4.4
TOTAL	N	11 983	7 947

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

SSS – secondary specialised school, SVS – secondary vocational school, VS - vocational school

Teachers in VET schools by years of practice as of 27 th April 2001 (in %)		
YEARS OF PRACTICE	SSS	SVS AND VS
-1	8.9	9.8
1 - 3	11.1	10.7
4 - 6	12.8	12.2
7 - 9	10.8	9.6
10 - 12	7.3	6.7
13 - 15	7.1	7.4
16 - 18	7.6	10.2
19 - 21	6.6	8.1
22 - 24	6.5	5.8
25 - 27	6.7	5.4
28 - 30	5.6	4.5

30+	9.0	9.5
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Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

SSS – secondary specialised school, SVS – secondary vocational school, VS - vocational school

Slovakia fully reflects the eEurope initiative by taking part in the eEurope+ initiative of the candidate countries. Through Resolution No 522/2001, the Slovak government adopted the Information Society Policy in the Slovak Republic (Politika informatizácie spoločnosti v Slovenskej republike) followed by the development of the Strategy of Informatisation of the Society in the Slovak Republic and the Action Plan (Stratégia informatizácie spoločnosti v Slovenskej republike a Akčný plán) adopted on 21st January 2004. Nevertheless, Slovakia is considered to be lagging behind the new member state leaders Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia in both supporting the information society and the informatisation of the education/learning environment according to EU benchmarks and international analyses.

Infovek, the national ICT implementation project in the education sector managed by the non-profit organisation Infovek Project Association (Asociácia projektu Infovek) and backed by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ustav informácií a prognóz školstva) and the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva), has significantly contributed to the introduction of information technology in the education sector. The Infovek project aimed to address all three pillars:

- technical infrastructure;
- ICT training of teachers; and
- digital/computer assisted resources improvement.

Nevertheless, hampered by low investment from public sources, Infovek was unable to provide for a significant breakdown. In 2004, supported by an investment by Slovak Telecom, all schools were wired to the Internet and equipped with ICT laboratories. Despite this improvement, further incentives are necessary to increase the ICT competence of teachers and trainers and the enrichment of digital teaching resources. The lack of quality teaching/learning materials in Slovak hampers both teachers and trainers in making use of ICT and the improvement of the learning environment. The government will not be able to solve this problem unless the business sector and private subjects are encouraged to make contributions aimed at the improvement of the teaching/learning environment at VET schools.

There is room for a curriculum innovations within the framework of official documents. Ten percent of the weekly instruction hours and up to 30% of the subjects content may be changed in order to adjust to specific, predominantly regional needs. All these changes initiated by teachers are the full responsibility of the schools. Schools interested in more extensive innovations can apply for approval at the Ministry of Education. Such an experiment must be supervised by an independent body, e.g. a university and based on the project approved by the Ministry of Education.

Nevertheless this instrument is of limited use, due to the lack of financial incentives for schools. There is no specific measure promoting innovations in pedagogy, thus the activities of enthusiasts are limited by the operational means of individual schools. Activities aimed at innovations are usually supported by international co-operation, e.g. from the Leonardo da Vinci programme or stimulated by direct pressure from the business sector.

0602 - TRAINING OF TEACHERS/TRAINERS IN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

The pre-service training of teachers is within the full competence of institutions of higher education. It is up to them to decide how many students are accepted and what kind of training is offered to them, provided the educational programme is accredited

by the Accreditation Commission (Akreditačná komisia), which is an advisory body affiliated to the government.

There is no difference in the training of the general subject teacher of grammar schools and VET schools. It is expected that student teachers will be able to adjust to VET school needs within the first year of service while assisted by experienced colleagues and the school director. VET teacher training programmes are marginal, although there is an accredited master's degree programme at University of Economics in Bratislava (Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave) and as an accredited bachelor's degree programme at Slovak University of Agriculture (Slovenská poľnohospodárska univerzita) in Nitra. Universities offer complementary pedagogical study (CPS, doplnujúce pedagogické štúdium) to all students of non-teaching programmes. The size of the enrolment in these complementary programmes is fully up to the students and the activity of the individual higher education institutions. CPS is the typical path for becoming a qualified VET teacher. In universities it takes four to six semesters and is offered in the form of concurrent study, which is free of charge and in consecutive study, which is not free of charge.

Similarly, there is no overarching strategy for trainer training. It is generally supported so that trainers acquire higher education. Hence, universities started to offer bachelor's degree programmes for trainers in the late 1990s. These studies are attractive for both in-service trainers and also for specialists interested in becoming trainers, because of the higher remuneration in comparison with trainers with only secondary education. Specialists interested in becoming VET teachers and/or trainers without teaching qualification are eligible for recruitment, however, they must simultaneously enter a CPS or other relevant higher education programme within the terms stipulated by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) Decree No 41/1996 Coll. on the professional and educational competence of the educational staff, as amended. The CPS is regulated by the Ministry of Education Decree No 68/1985 Coll.

In-service training is stipulated in detail in the Ministry of Education Decree No 42/1996 Coll. on the In-service training of the educational staff (Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva c. 42/1996 Z.z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní pedagogických pracovníkov), together with the Ministry of Education Decree No 41/1996 Coll. on the Professional and educational competence of the educational staff (Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva c. 41/1996 Z.z. o odbornej a pedagogickej spôsobilosti pedagogických zamestnancov).

Within these decrees, diverse types and forms of in-service training, such as:

- the introduction of new teachers into practice (the director of the school is responsible);
- refresher work in-service training;
- specialised innovative studies for selected staff leading to achievement of the first qualification exam and followed by promotion;
- specialised qualification studies expanding the competence of qualified teachers to teach selected subjects and/or deal with children with special needs;
- training in leadership for future or newly-appointed directors or deputy directors;

are regulated along with the competence sharing among schools, universities and regional Methodological and Pedagogical Centres (metodicko-pedagogické centrá). In-service training institutionally provided for by the Methodological and Pedagogical Centres are offered for free and are freely accessible, provided that there is no time conflict with teaching duties and that the travel costs are affordable. In-service training suffers from the lack of means for institutional training offered by the Ministry of Education via Methodological and Pedagogical Centres and by the low purchasing power of teachers concerning continuing training offered by private training institutions

(predominantly related to ICT, foreign languages, communication and management training).

	PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	IN-SERVICE TRAINING
TEACHERS OF GENERAL EDUCATION SUBJECTS	University teacher training programme	Methodological and Pedagogical Centre (metodicko-pedagogické centrum) or university
TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS (THEORY)	University teacher training programmes (very rare case) or university master degree from non-teacher training programme supplemented by complementary pedagogical studies at the university in consecutive or concurrent form (typical case)	Methodological and Pedagogical Centre or university
TRAINERS IN VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS (PRACTICE IN SCHOOL-BASED WORKSHOPS)	ISCED 3A education and experience in relevant field supplemented by complementary pedagogical studies for trainers usually at the Methodological and Pedagogical Centre, or bachelor study at university (new trend)	Methodological and Pedagogical Centre

As a rule, Methodological and Pedagogical Centres offer more training opportunities for general subject teachers than for VET teachers and trainers. The best chance for innovative impulses for vocational teachers and trainers are international projects aimed at curricular innovations, such as those organised by the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) or based on school partnerships within the Leonardo da Vinci and Comenius programmes. Additional future opportunities must be created by the involvement of social partners in quality assurance.

0603 - TRAINING OF TRAINERS/TEACHERS AT THE WORKPLACE (APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING AND CVET IN ENTERPRISES)

There is no traditional apprenticeship training in Slovakia. Practical training is usually school based and complemented predominantly in the service sector by training at the workplace, which has the status of the Centre of Practical Training. All trainers are considered educational staff and therefore the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) Decree No 41/1996 Coll. on the Professional and educational competence of the educational staff (Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva č. 41/1996 Z.z. o odbornej a pedagogickej spôsobilosti pedagogických zamestnancov), is applied to them. They must be at least ISCED 3A educated. In addition, they must have completed the complementary pedagogical study (doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium) programme.

In comparison with general subjects where methodologies and methods of instruction have been quite deeply elaborated, for VET school teachers of vocational subjects and for trainers less training is directly aimed at concrete instruction. They are usually subjected to “general didactics” training aiming at general teaching methods without close links to the content to be taught in the future. Surely, vocational teachers and trainers are those who would stress an interest in very practical training within their initial training and would be interested in this kind of training within in-service programmes.

There are no minimum requirements for trainers within CVET except for those imposed by providers themselves and by enterprises within the enterprise based training.

0604 - TRAINING OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING (OUTSIDE ENTERPRISES)

There are no minimum requirements for teachers/trainers within CVET except for those imposed by professional chambers and/or training providers offering CVET for specific professions (e.g. teachers and regulated professions). The Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education (Akreditačná komisia Ministerstva školstva) might require the proof of competence when deciding on the accreditation of educational activities of providers wishing to enhance the status of their service and/or willing to apply for funding from state budget based means, e.g. within labour market training.

07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

The transformation of the command economy to a market driven economy has created new challenges for regional VET schools. School policies, which were originally purely supply-driven, had to be aligned to the changing regional labour markets but also to the newly emerging educational services market.

The VET school input market has been created as a consequence of the introduction of freedom and democracy. Students and their parents are fully aware of their rights to the free choice of profession and access to education and training. They are more active in pressing towards opening positions in VET schools corresponding to their desires. A significant demographic decrease is adding an additional dimension to the demand/supply interaction in this market. Schools must be more sensitive to student demands in this more competitive environment and they have to fight hard for students, in particular with grammar schools (gymnaziá). VET schools therefore show two tendencies: preferences for ISCED 3A over ISCED 3C programmes and new programmes regardless their original profiles.

VET schools in the 1980s, originally specific branch and sector serving institutions, are gradually transforming into regional VET providers. This process is supported by merging diverse schools into associated secondary schools (združené stredné školy) offering a variety of education and training for diverse professions in a variety of sectors.

At the same time, in competition with grammar schools, VET schools try to avoid providing too narrow qualifications by offering wider profiles and more options in selecting subjects. Secondary vocational schools (stredné odborné učilištia) are expanding the provision of ISCED 3A "maturita" studies, which are less academic compared to grammar schools and those of secondary specialised schools (stredné odborné školy), but which bring a higher socio-economic status and other advantages in the labour market.

The output market of VET schools is extremely volatile. Regional economies are subject to dramatic changes; many large enterprises have declared bankruptcy and some traditional sectors are in irreversible decline. New strategic investors are still mapping the territory and the new regional economy priorities for the next 15 years are currently being developed. Also, small and medium size enterprises are far from becoming stabilised. Business people fighting for their daily survival usually offer very broad signals concerning labour force needs. Required flexibility, reliability, ICT skills and language skills, together with the general criticism of the quality of graduates are the most typical remarks. Significantly only the most successful and restructured sectors offer clear signals to VET schools (the automotive industry and financial services).

Throughout the 1990s and up till now, VET school policies were input market-focused rather than output market-focused. A vivid input market with easier to read signals and immediate impacts and benefits dominated the hazy output market with its deficient labour market intelligence and low job creation. As a consequence, VET schools consider recruitment activities and meeting the needs and desires of students and parents in formal qualifications more important than labour market analyses. With accession to the EU, increasing political stability and economic improvement, regional economic policies are more visible and in more advanced regions with new investments and plants, human resource policy development is in progress assisted by

EU structural funds. There is however a very large gap between western Slovakia and the Capital region, and other regions, especially southern and eastern Slovakia. The early identification of skill needs in regions has developed into the priority of ESF, however there is still a lack of institutional ability and experience. There is no substantial experience in monitoring labour market needs and there is no institution with quality know-how in labour market intelligence. This is why the creation of institutions able to measure educational outputs of secondary schools and institutions able to provide for labour market intelligence are prioritised within national ESF projects from 2004 to 2006.

In tertiary education in contrast to the 1990s, when all higher education institutions were considered universities regardless of their profile and research activities, Act No 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education (Zákon č. 131/2002 Z.z. o vysokých školách), initiated diversification within tertiary education and established explicit differences between university and non-university tertiary education, and explicitly introduced the category of research universities. A window has been opened for the provision of tailor-made practice oriented bachelor studies programmes as well as for the establishment of private higher education institutions. However, it will take time within which the quality labour market need-adjusted programmes will be accredited and implemented.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Two separate institutions directly managed by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) provide for the institutional support of regional schooling (mainly curricular). The National Institute for Education (Štátny pedagogický ústav) is aimed at serving general education and the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) at serving vocational education and training. The two institutions must co-operate in the provision of basic pedagogical documents (základné pedagogické dokumenty) for general subjects of VET schools and in the introduction of the new form of school leaving exams at secondary schools. So far, the rather limited co-operation should be boosted by the ESF project aimed at the reconstruction of the general subjects of the curricula at VET schools. These curricula were traditionally constructed as restricted derivations of grammar school (gymnázium) curricula rather than genuine occupation profile-aligned products. With the increasing recognition of the importance of measuring educational output and the implementation of quality assurance, the co-operation of the two institutions will be strengthened.

Co-operation between secondary schools and institutions of higher education is foreseen with the nation-wide introduction of standardised tests within the so-called external component of the school leaving exams (maturitná skúška). Although it cannot be expected that higher education institutions will accept school leaving exam results in lieu of entrance exams, as is often mentioned in public discussions, with the effort to develop more valid and reliable measurement instruments, a natural field of co-operation between the two levels will develop.

There are traditionally close links between VET schools and corresponding faculties of technical universities of their respective branches. Similar to regional schooling, technical universities facing a decline in population and a shift in interest towards humanities and arts, are trying to attract VET schools graduates; as a consequence diverse activities among these institutions are emerging. Nevertheless, there is no institutional co-operation between tertiary and secondary levels in the content of education; tertiary level specialists participate in curricular innovations in secondary VET education on a personal basis.

Nevertheless, with the new act on education and upbringing and the establishment of the National Curriculum Board (Národná kurikulumná rada), the institutional backing of co-operation appears possible. The development of modules, already in process on an experimental basis in secondary VET, might be boosted by new European policies: refining the national qualification frameworks and the introduction of credits in VET.

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

Currently, the innovation of curricula is predominantly educational sector impulse-driven, which may not primarily reflect business sector needs. Although social partners were invited to contribute to innovations and innovation mechanisms already set up by 14 multi-partisan expert commissions covering all sectors of the national economy, employers and trade unions have not yet been of substantial influence (except for automotive and financial sectors). Curricula renewal is a permanent process with one important tendency – overcoming traditional VET fragmentation into sub-specialisations. New curricula (the so-called basic pedagogical documents (základné pedagogické dokumenty)), are more widely constructed and overarch former sub-specialisations while offering more room for individual adjustment of the curricula (unfortunately within tight fiscal limits this is unlikely to happen).

The aforementioned fourteen expert commissions are established at the national level and are affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) providing for administrative infrastructure as well as methodological advice. However, curricula agreed within expert commissions must be approved (and are subject to change) by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva). There are no regional bodies involved in curricula development, however, all schools are given the opportunity to make use of the 10/30 formula to adjust curricula to regional/local needs. Schools are free to change 10% of the weekly hours of instruction and 30% of the content within certain subjects. Sectoral interest in changing curricula could be enforced within expert commissions or by ad hoc sectoral representative initiatives.

New basic pedagogical experiments contain explicitly stated competencies, among which new basic skills are embedded. Although the importance of new skills is fully recognised and the importance of the introduction of new methods such as e-learning is recommended and supported, progress in this field has been hampered by the lack of equipment and an insufficiently developed learning environment as well as by rather traditional teacher and trainer training.

Digital resources are limited and despite the successful fulfilment of the PCs for Schools project (all basic and secondary schools are wired to the Internet as a result of a massive investment in 2004) computer assisted learning and e-learning is applied very selectively and promoted predominantly by highly motivated individuals. Despite solid policy papers and activity (Infovek project) mainstreaming in this field is a difficult challenge for both secondary and tertiary education. Leaders in this field are secondary schools and higher education institutions involved in international projects. Centres of distance education established in the 1990s within PHARE programmes and in possession of the best know-how in this field could be supportive for mainstreaming the experience within tertiary education and CVET, provided financial backing is ensured.

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

0801 - VALIDATION OF FORMAL LEARNING: GENERAL CONCEPTS AND SCHEMES

The validation of formal learning in Slovakia still follows a traditional pattern. Schools providing primary and secondary education are automatically accredited within the approval process of the establishment of the school and/or within the adoption of curricula (basic pedagogical documents) approved by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva). No specific instruments are aimed at controlling educational output in VET and no national model of quality assurance has been adopted. Despite the partial involvement of social partners during final examinations of secondary VET students, there are no mechanisms in support of achieving desired standards and qualifications. New models of matura exam (maturitná skúška) and ISCED 3C final exam (záverečná skúška) are being developed as a result of the recognition of the high risk of the erosion of educational standards. The formal education system associated continuing training, which is provided by secondary schools is also assessed by the Ministry of Education within regular procedures of inclusion/exclusion from the network of schools and/or network of study and training branches (educational programmes). It is expected that the quality of IVET, a new framework and methodology of validations,

will be tackled within a new act on education and upbringing already in the process of elaboration at the Ministry of Education.

Nevertheless, according to EU accession negotiations, all relevant legislation has been harmonised, e.g. by Act No 477/2002 Coll. on the Recognition of Vocational Qualifications (Zákon č. 477/2002 Z.z. o uznávaní odborných kvalifikácií), and full information on regulated professions is provided by the Slovak Centre for Equivalence of Diplomas ENIC/NARIC (Stredisko pre ekvivalenciu dokladov o vzdelaní) website <http://www.uips.sk/ekviv/index.html>.

Tertiary VET programmes are accredited by the Accreditation Commission (Akreditačná komisia) of the Slovak Government, pursuant to criteria laid down for the individual branches of studies. Furthermore, this accreditation is only the accreditation at the input; the mechanisms of educational output assessment and quality assurance are still in the process of development.

Continuing training institutions submit to the accreditation process, pursuant to Act No 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (Zákon č. 386/1997 Z.z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní) as amended. This is also an input focusing process. The quality of CVT is purely market driven with no nation-wide requirements for the implementation of quality assurance.

Since the run-up to EU accession, private providers have increasingly offered VET with compatible qualification requirements from other EU countries. Thus, graduates of these programmes receive qualifications that are recognised by private enterprises co-operating or managed by international entrepreneurs but not necessarily by Slovak legislation.

0802 - VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still only addressed by particular activities, e.g. within Leonardo da Vinci projects implementation; and/or it is a subject to academic discussions. Nation-wide, this discussion was opened by the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* and the subsequent consultation process. Despite the positive approach towards the Copenhagen process and the recognition of the importance of this topic, no substantial national action in this field is in progress. Formal education system representatives are rather suspicious about the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning and potential beneficiaries from enterprises and citizens themselves have not been activated so far. It is expected that after the Maastricht communiqué, specific policy agendas will be gradually formulated in this field. The most important issue is the methodology of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Agreement on this is more important than legislative backing itself, which has yet to be prepared.

09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Guidance and counselling in the Slovak Republic has three pillars.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR.

It is provided within the traditional guidance system of the educational sector, which is represented by individual counsellors at schools and by specific counselling institutions.

- School counsellors (výchovní poradcovia) are appointed to all basic schools (základné školy) providing both primary and lower secondary level education (they are not appointed at small rural schools providing primary education), grammar schools (gymnázia) and most VET schools. Occasionally, they are supported by a school psychologist (školský psychológ). There were 151 psychologists appointed to schools in 2004, only 17 of which were appointed to VET schools. Special

pedagogues (školskí špeciálni pedagógovia) provide special care for special educational needs (SEN) children which could also include guidance services. The services of school special pedagogues traditionally working at special schools (špeciálne školy) is also required by mainstream schools as a consequence of the growing integration of SEN children into basic schools. Such counsellors provide a wider range of support services than guidance.

- Educational and psychological counselling centres (Pedagogicko-psychologické poradne) are located in 77 cities serving all 79 districts. They serve basic school pupils up to age 16. There are also 8 regional centres serving secondary school youth (usually up to 19/20 years of age). All centres provide guidance services as part of their wider mission, which includes consultations for students, parents and educators, psychological diagnoses and submitting proposals for the improvement of the psychological and social development of students.
- 65 special education counselling centres (špeciálnopedagogické poradne) serve SEN children and youth attending special schools. There are also seven child integration centres (detské integračné centrá) for children with various types of disabilities.
- Four school computation centres (školské výpočtové strediská) with an education information system provide information about higher education institutions and secondary schools and their admission procedures.

Within the education sector, the Methodological Council for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (Metodická rada pre výchovné a psychologické poradenstvo a prevenciu) has been established as an advisory body of the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva). It is composed of representatives of educational and psychological counselling centres, educational counsellors and school psychologists, and other experts from the field. Its role is to monitor activities of schools and their facilities in the area of counselling, to comment on policy papers and draft laws and to propose interventions.

Further measures have also been taken under the National Employment Action Plan for 2002-2003 (Národný akčný plán zamestnanosti na roky 2002-2003). To facilitate the transition from school to work, the Ministry of Education started an Introduction to the World of Work (Úvod do sveta práce) programme in 2003 which was added as a curricula option in both basic and upper secondary schools. VET schools are actively introducing this subject into their curricula. A World of Work guide has been prepared for professions in 15 sectors. 15 booklets describe the various sectors and provide basic information about their professions. The booklets are supported by the website www.svetprace.sk.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN WIDER FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICES:

Psychological Counselling Centre (Centrum poradensko-psychologických služieb) is managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) and is designed for individuals, couples and families. The Centre has 46 regional branch offices and mainly deals with family counselling of which vocational and career guidance can be a sub-component.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

Guidance and counselling is an integral part of the services provided by 45 Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Úrady práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) headed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny), which in turn is directly managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and

the Family. Since January 2004, this network replaced the public legal National Labour Office (Národný úrad práce) with eight regional and 79 district offices.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Public sector services are complemented by private sector activities. Internet-linked services are the most popular. Predominantly university educated individuals make use of specific portals, e.g. www.profesia.sk or www.askforjob.sk. The co-operation of public employment services with this kind of digital service provider, as well as district labour offices with private local service providers is gradually increasing.

The Euroguidance Centre (National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance) was established in 1998 and is affiliated to the National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. Other instruments have developed with international cooperation; the Leonardo da Vinci project has led to the development of the counselling portal: www.povolania.sk.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

As indicated in 0901, guidance and counselling services are provided by 3 pillars.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

School counsellors (výchovní poradcovia), school psychologists (školskí psychológovia) and special pedagogues (školskí špeciálni pedagógovia) provide guidance services to children and young people. School counsellors should offer information about subsequent educational possibilities, professions for which schools offer VET, and about the situation on the labour market. In practice, the educational counsellor's ability to provide good quality information depends on their co-operation with the next level of schools and the local labour office. Educational counsellors are not expected to assess individual abilities and aptitudes, this is offered in co-operation with specialists from Educational and Psychological Counselling Centre (Školská pedagogicko-psychologická poradňa) of which there are 77 with two affiliations serving all schools in the 79 administrative districts and 8 serving educational institutions (predominantly secondary schools) within the 8 administrative regions in Slovakia. Education counselling is regulated by Ministry of Education Decree No 43/1996 Coll. (Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva SR c. 43/1996 Z.z. o podrobnostiach o výchovnom poradenstve a o poradenských zariadeniach). Although all Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres serve educational institutions, they are also open to parents and students looking for advice and they cover a wide range of services to prevent mental, emotional and social disorders among pupils and students of primary and secondary school age.

Higher education institution students are served by psychological counselling centres established at university seats, however vocational guidance and counselling represents a rather a marginal segment.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN WIDER FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICES

The 46 regional branch offices of the Psychological Counselling Centre (Centrum poradensko-psychologických služieb), traditionally offer services to adults and their families. Since the 1990s they have been confronted with increased vocational guidance and counselling requirements for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment. However, this target group should be primarily addressed by the first contact staff of labour offices (see below).

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The information and counselling services of labour offices for the unemployed and job seekers are stipulated by Act No 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (Zákon c. 5/2004 Z.z. o službách zamestnanosti). These services provide assistance in selecting professions and occupations suitable for individuals, and in the selection of employees for employers. According to § 43 of the act, the office may organise professional consultancy in the form of individual and group consultations and guarantees the preparation of an individual action plan to support jobseekers on file in the register for a specified time. The individual action plan is based on an evaluation of personality, abilities and professional skills of the applicant and is prepared by the jobseeker in cooperation with the professional consultant. It determines the type and scope of

assistance required for facilitating his/her occupational reintegration. According to § 8 of the act, disadvantaged job seekers include citizens less than 25 years of age, citizens more than 50 years of age, long-term unemployed, those returning to the labour market after maternity leave, citizens at risk due to their lack of preparedness for the labour market needs as a consequence of parental obligations, single parents with children less than 10 years of age, citizens who are not disabled but who have lost the ability to carry out their current employment for health reasons, job seeking immigrants from the European Union, and disabled people.

It is at the discretion of the professionals from different institutions whether they make use of individual or group-oriented instruments and what kind of instruments they employ. Within labour offices, preparing individual action plans is a preferred tool. Over 200 000 of the registered unemployed (representing over 40% of the total number) developed such plans in 2003, according to the Annual report of the National Labour Office (Národný úrad práce replaced by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny).

Computer based services and specialized Internet portals (see also 0901) are booming and attract the young and better educated, while job fairs and print publications including specialised weeklies remain popular with the older and less educated. ESF offers considerable opportunity for the development of ICT linked services, e.g. publicly accessible points of Internet based services are to be established.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

- Educational (school) counsellors (výchovní poradcovia) at schools are qualified subject teachers, often with special in-service training but without special qualifications. As a rule, an experienced teacher is identified by the school head for this service and sent to a part-time training course provided within in-service teacher training and/or specific lectures. In-service training programmes are usually offered by methodological and pedagogical centres and approved by the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) after reviews by two independent experts. There has been a lengthy discussion about the qualification requirement for counselling services. For example, a proposal of the association of school counsellors has established qualification requirements which will be discussed at the Methodological Council for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (Metodická rada pre výchovné a psychologické poradenstvo a prevenciu), an advisory body of the Ministry of Education in 2005.
- Special pedagogues (školskí špeciálni pedagógovia) working at the Educational and Psychological Counselling Centre (Školská pedagogicko-psychologická poradna) are graduates from special pedagogical master degree programmes. Traditionally, the Comenius University Faculty of Education (Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Komenského) was the only higher education institution offering this programme.
- School psychologists (školskí psychológovia) are graduates from university masters programmes in psychology or educational psychology.

Currently there are no pre-service study programmes focusing on career information, guidance or counselling. Within the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) led Leonardo da Vinci MODILE-EUROCARCO project,

a professional guidance and counselling educational programme has been developed. The programme is based on eleven modules: Module 1 – General Aspects, Module 2 – Information Management, Module 3 – Quality Management, Module 4 – Community Cooperation, Module 5 – Labour Relations, Module 6 – Occupational, Educational and Career Counselling Psychology, Module 7 – Sociology, Module 8 – Minority Groups in Career Counselling, Module 9 – Ethics in Career Counselling, Module 10 – Marketing in Career Counselling, Module 11 – Statistics. A part of the Educational Program includes the Handbook of Applicable Legislation and the Terminological Dictionary. The programme is ready for use within in-service training of education (school) counsellors. It depends on the universities whether they make use of this product in order to turn it into an accredited bachelor's study programme.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN WIDER FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICES

Counsellors at Psychological Counselling Centres are also graduates from university masters programmes in psychology or educational psychology.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Counsellors at labour offices are required to have at least a bachelor's degree with a major in social or human science. At the moment, there are many graduates from the university social work study programme working in the field, however, many of the counsellors employed in the 1990s had no more than secondary school education.

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

HOW MUCH TO INVEST IN EDUCATION

The Slovak government is committed in policy documents (National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic (Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov), see 0201) to increasing public expenditure on education from less than 4% of GDP to a minimum of 5% until 2006 and to a minimum of 6% until 2010. Specific commitments were also made to increasing expenditure on tertiary education (according to article 10 (2a) of the Concept for the Further Development of Tertiary Education for the 21st Century (Konceptia ďalšieho rozvoja vysokého školstva na Slovensku pre 21. storočie)) by 0.1% of GDP measured on a yearly basis for 2001, 2002 and 2003. Nevertheless, such policy statements have been revised in the context of the need to reduce the state budget deficit to below 3% to meet the Maastricht criteria and Slovakia has remained at the bottom of the EU in expenditures on education (expressed as a share of GDP).

DEBATING THE REFORM ON FINANCING VET

A number of financing reforms have been suggested. From the perspective of practitioners they have wanted:

- unify school management modes - removing the current division between contributory and budgetary organisations (see 1002);
- enable the establishment of schools as non-profit organisations; and
- establish a VET Development and Support Fund.

Opinions of the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo financií) have differed. They have stressed:

- fiscal discipline and the introduction of hard budget constraints (managers cannot expect that the government will bail them when they incur losses); and
- on-line monitoring of expenditures in all public organisations by the State Treasury (Štátna pokladnica).

The Ministry of Finance did not support the creation of the levy type VET fund nor any other tax-linked fiscal incentives in support of VET/LLL by enterprises and individuals. The only appropriate tool according to the Ministry of Finance was the reduction of corporate and income tax (now at a flat rate of 19%).

FUNDING FLOWS CHANGES TO IVET

In 2004, the funding system changed whereby state funds were distributed to establishments whether municipalities, self-governing regions, or newly created regional (school) offices (krajské školské úrady). Funds are distributed from:

- Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) and its budget chapter (over 76% of the total regional schooling budget) via 8 regional school offices, which cannot redistribute funds received but must earmark the funds and pass them to establishments (inclusive private and church affiliated) for financing wages and operational expenditures of schools (regional school offices are at the same time establishments of some educational institutions – see 0301);
- Ministry of Finance directly to establishments (local municipalities and/or regional governments for financing additional activities e.g. school clubs, canteens, etc.

Establishers receive means calculated exactly according to per capita normatives explained later but they could partly redistribute them. They must transfer to schools 80 % of the wage normative and 75% of the operational normative. In order to prevent hard impact of per capita funding to respective schools (predominantly small rural schools) a minimum guaranteed funding is envisaged for the next three years, e.g. 95% of previous year expenditures for current expenditures are guaranteed by the Ministry of Education in 2004.

From 2005, fiscal decentralisation will come into force through redefinition of income tax revenue: 70.3 % will be earmarked for municipalities, 23.5% for self-governing regions and 6.2% remaining with the state as the reserve. Municipalities and regions will also become responsible for setting the amount of some other taxes (predominantly the property tax).

EXPECTATIONS OF FUTURE CHANGES

Despite many reforms, there were no substantial changes in the origin of budgets - IVET has remained predominantly a state (public) budget issue. Reform involving the business sector in both direct IVET co-financing and consequently the quality check of VET is pending. There were also all proposals to introduce fiscal incentives in support of CVET rejected. Some change could be expected in the light of the creation in February 2004 of an expert group to propose new financing CVET/LLL measures, including the analysis of internationally known schemes (see also 1005 and 1101).

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

As explained in 0401, there are 2 main types of upper secondary schools providing VET qualifications: secondary specialised schools (SSS, stredné odborné školy) and secondary vocational schools (SVS, stredné odborné učilištia). In recent years, the main VET providers (SSS and SVS) have been merging to form associated secondary schools (ASS, združené stredné školy).

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TYPES

The funding for these schools has differed. SSS have been classified as budgetary organisations whereby they were purely state funded whereas SVS have been classified as contributory organisations whereby they were only co-funded by the state (due to their historical links with enterprises and the funding they used to receive from them). ASS tend to be contributory organisations, however, it is up to educational authorities to decide on the financial management type in the phase of the merging of original schools.

The most important difference in management was this: budgetary organisations were due to return their income to the state budget, while contributory organisations were not. The most important difference affecting the accountancy of contributory organisations concerns depreciation, which is not applied within the accountancy of budgetary organisations.

In the 1990s, budgetary organisations started raising funds that are not “eaten” back by the state budget in co-operation with affiliated non-profit organisations. These extra budgetary funds were used predominantly for school equipment improvement, compensating for the shortage of funds from the state budget. The contributory organisations, facing the risk of reduced state contributions, behaved similarly. On the other hand, schools and their establishers were not pushed to efficient management under the rule of soft budget constraint, allowing for the bailing out of those not able to keep the budget balanced.

CURRENT EXPENDITURES

All VET schools are legal entities and have their own budgets, albeit, operated under strict regulations.

Budgets are set through a formula comprised of normatives. Since a reform in 2003, this has meant that all schools regardless of type and ownership (i.e. also private schools) are subsidised from the state budget equally based on normatives figures; and class normatives (introduced in 2001) were replaced by per capita normatives (for funding flows see 1001).

The following table offers an overview of current expenditure normatives (per student contributions).

Current expenditure normatives for school categories for 2004 (in EUR)						
SCHOOL CATEGORY	WAGE NORMATIVE	OPERATIONAL NORMATIVE		NORMATIVE TOTAL (**)		LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (***)
		MIN (*)	MAX (*)	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	
REGULAR BS	409.01	98.18	119.17	507.19	528.18	14.19
GS	490.45	99.78	120.77	590.23	611.22	15.79
SSS	682.60	103.60	124.59	786.20	807.19	19.61
SSS OF ART, HEALTH	792.47	105.76	126.75	898.23	919.22	21.77
CONSERVATORIES	1 707.85	123.83	144.83	1 831.68	1 852.67	39.84
SVS AND VS	746.72	120.63	141.62	867.35	888.34	20.87
CPT	309.26	96.21	117.20	405.47	426.46	12.22

SS FOR THE DISABLED	1 056.63	142.52	163.51	1 199.15	1 220.14	26.99
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Source: Ministry of Education SR

Note: EUR 1 = SKK 41.16 as of 31 December 2003

BS - basic schools (základné školy), GS - grammar schools, SSS - secondary specialised schools, SVS – secondary vocational schools, VS – vocational schools (ucilištia), CPT – centres of practical training (strediská praktického vyucovania), SS – secondary schools; BS and GS data are presented for the sake of comparison

(*) The range in operational normatives (only minimum and maximum is presented in the table) is in detail regulated according to six specific variables (e.g. one of variables is represented by eight climate categories with different heating requirements)
(**) Sum of two normatives (wage and operational); calculated per student
(***) Means out of total amount (normative total) intended for the direct funding of learning environment (materials, equipment)

CAPITAL BUDGETS

Capital expenditures are also allocated via per capita normatives. Before these are applied a certain percentage is deducted for centrally supervised activities, e.g. construction of new schools. Thus, capital investment is sensitive to the state budget capacity and the limits set by the fiscal policy of the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo financií).

IMPACT OF FUNDING CHANGES FOR IVET

While the introduction of normative funding has meant a more transparent allocation of funds to schools as well as a more realistic allocation reflecting the real costs of educational programmes, in practice the normative figures have been set and adjusted to the possibilities of the state budget.

PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN IVET

Parents pay for school supplies and special textbooks (e.g. foreign language books printed abroad and considered by the school to be more appropriate than those available for free). They are also usually required to contribute to the budget maintained by the Association of Parents (Rodicovské združenie). There are no detailed analyses of these marginal sources.

2% of the income tax and corporate tax could be allocated for activities of NGO's, school-affiliated NGO's earn from this source successfully for the improvement of the learning environment. There are no direct contributions to IVET from private sources.

1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

Funding for CVET is not regulated by any specific legislation. Few institutions report systematically on their CVET activities. Therefore distribution of means is offered rather than the absolute numbers in the following table. 2003 data are presented to indicate the total amounts within respective lines.

Distribution of sources of financing of CVET* in 1999-2003 (% , in 1000s EUR)						
TYPE OF SOURCES	1997	1999	2001	2002	2003	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	1000s EUR
STATE BUDGET SUBSIDIES	17	19	21	24	23	7 228.59

EXTRA-BUDGETARY SOURCES	2	4	4	-	-	-
EMPLOYERS	30	16	18	13	14	4 314.83
TRAINEES	25	37	36	43	38	11 699.7
LABOUR OFFICES	9	1	6	10	8	2 356.88
DONATIONS OF NATURAL AND LEGAL PERSONS	1	0	2	2	2	460.43
OTHER ACTIVITIES OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	7	8	4	-	-	-
OTHERS	9	15	9	8	15	4 604.58
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	30 665.05

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva)

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 41.16 as of 31 December 2003

* data from well-disciplined institutions (e.g. 372 in 2003) and at the same time the most important providers

These data do allow for the identification of some trends such as citizens needs to use their own resources to fund their training either to improve or maintain their potential employability. The highest share in financing of CVET came from trainees (with a gradual increase from 25% to 38% in share), followed by subsidies from the state budget and then employers (with a gradual decrease in share from 30% to 14%).

It is estimated, that per-trainee expenditures are similar to per-student costs in initial VET, in the case of training similar to comparable programmes of formal education.

2003 LLL data, with 4.8% of 25-64 olds in CVET, did not confirm the surprisingly highest share (9%) among acceding countries in 2002. Changes in the methodology of measuring in 2003 could explain the difference, but not the low figure. Thus, the promotion of CVET/LLL and re-thinking fiscal incentives are gaining in importance.

There are no specialised instruments for the promotion of CVET, except for specific professions (e.g. in-service training of teachers or civil servants in administration). In general, CVET is not a crucial topic of social dialogue, except in the chemistry sector, due to the individual efforts of the trade union's head negotiator.

Slovakia did not participate in the international survey CVTS 2, and therefore there are no reliable EU comparable data about enterprise-based CVET.

1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

In 2004, a state-managed network of 45 Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family was established (replacing the public legal National Labour Office - Národný úrad práce), headed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny).

The following table offers the list of active labour market policies in 2002 and 2003.

Active labour market policies in 2002 and 2003 (by respective paragraphs of Act No 387/1996 Coll. on employment (Zákon č. 387/1996 Z.z. o zamestnanosti), as amended)

ALMP TOOLS	ALMP IN 2002		ALMP IN 2003	
	BUDGET ASSIGNED (IN EUR)	PEOPLE AFFECTED OR PLACES CREATED	BUDGET ASSIGNED (IN EUR)	PEOPLE AFFECTED OR PLACES CREATED
§ 82	10 494 950.90	48 143	4 904 197.11	24 711
§ 84	297 375.10	1 513	47 941.59	329
§ 86	2 840 944.34	17 719	82 409.14	530
§ 88	16 354 205.44	9 122	10 098 240.96	7 588
§ 89	14 667 219.95	11 815	6 710 036.39	4 185
§ 90	2 809 962.29	1 309	952 490.14	444
§ 90	191 678.96	410	28 698.06	54
§ 90B	1 137 826.41	4 428	655 731.20	2 738
§ 91	20 012 853.40	22 973	13 162 997.04	11 718
§ 91A	8 281 871.40	17 472	929 300.53	1 696
§ 92	4 370 782.68	2 191	2 050 306.78	998
§ 93	5 899 967.57	4 871	1 458 858.75	1 332
§ 107	7 314 322.13	1 960	4 494 681.71	1 361
§ 108	551 180.76	157	468 882.77	151
TOTAL	95 225 141.33	144 083	46 044 772.16	57 835

Source: National Labour Office and Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (2003 data)

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 41.16 as of 31 December 2003

§ 82 Re-training of Registered Unemployed, § 84 Re-training of Employees, § 86 Travel Costs Reimbursement, § 88 Concerted Placement in Self-employment, § 89 Concerted Placement with Employer, § 90 Concerted Placement for Graduates and Youth, § 90a Short-term Concerted Placement for Graduates and Youth, § 90b Graduates' Placement, § 91 Concerted Placement in Community Service, § 91a Concerted Placement in Community Service for Long-term RU, § 92 Specific Concerted Placement, § 93 Short-term Concerted Placement, § 107 Sheltered Places Created by Employers, § 108 Sheltered Places Created by Self-employers.

Numbers of people in re-training represented 5.6% of the registered unemployed in 2003, decreasing from 9.4% in 2002 back to the level of 2001. Since the late 1990s, expenditure on labour market training was not of substantial importance either in budgetary volume or in the number of trained individuals (except for 2002). Training for unemployed people was not considered an efficient tool for fighting unemployment as a consequence of the high dead weight and low absorption of the labour market.

Within the new model of employment services, budgets are provided for specific proactive incentives. An Activation bonus will also be given to those in re-training. Job seeking should also be stimulated by reimbursement of training costs to providers of VET; an employer could receive contributions up to 90% of its costs.

Since 2004, ESF has become the crucial instrument for training of unemployed and those at risk of unemployment. The government is trying to prevent the exclusion of low capitalised but capable applicants from the competition. Hence, no co-financing is required from non-profit institutions, maximum 5 % from public institutions, and maximum 25% from private subjects, when applying to ESF.

1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Most VET is funded from the state budget and debate focuses on the need to increase the amount and efficiency of public investment and how to attract more private funding. In 2004 promising changes are visible, e.g. The Strategy of the Development of the Competitiveness of Slovakia till 2010: The National Lisbon Strategy (Stratégia rozvoja konkurencieschopnosti Slovenska do roku 2010: Národná Lisabonská stratégia) elaborated by the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo financií) and The National Action Plan of Employment for 2004 –2006 (NAPE, Národný akčný plán zamestnanosti na roky 2004-2006) and ESF related programming documents elaborated under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny). NAPE explicitly mentions recommendations on “investing more and more effectively in human capital and lifelong learning” and that “greater incentives to invest in training and to facilitate access to training are key requirements for the development of a lifelong learning strategy.” Principle 4 “Support of human capital investment and lifelong learning” in line with The Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic (Konceptia celoživotného vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike) adopted by the government in February 2004, put stress on enhancing investment in lifelong learning by:

- developing the strategy of multi-source financing of lifelong learning with the aim to increase the amount of financial means invested in education/training;
- implementing possible tax relief for employers aimed at increasing their investment in the training of their employees; and
- providing advantages for employers (financial, via tax relief, etc.) who cooperate with higher education institutions in developing study programmes and the provision of student practice.

In contrast to previous years this is clearly influenced by EU documents, and hopefully it indicates a real shift from rhetoric to practice in the future.

11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

NATIONAL LISBON STRATEGY

A policy paper aimed at the development of the competitiveness of Slovakia till 2010 (Stratégia rozvoja konkurencieschopnosti Slovenska do roku 2010: Národná lisabonská stratégia) has been elaborated by the Ministry of Finance (Ministerstvo financií) with the assistance of a group of experts including the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) and the Ministry of Education (Ministerstvo školstva) and was adopted by the government in November 2004. VET and LLL related priorities outlined within this paper are as follows:

- shifting pedagogy from information provision to information processing;
- improving competencies in languages and ICT of secondary school graduates;
- improving the quality of teachers and making this profession more attractive for young people;
- gradually expanding the length of education and training in order to make ISCED 3A level (maturita) a minimum standard for almost everyone;
- improving the provision of services for gifted children and youth;
- supporting programmes related to the integration of children from socially disadvantaged environments into mainstream education;
- enhancing the supply and the quality of programmes of higher education, including the provision of a demand-driven variety of lifelong learning opportunities.

In addition to the well-known priority of enriching the provision of tertiary education programmes by co-financing studies by students, complemented by a more generous system of scholarships, three new important points are stated in this document:

- the importance of stimulating lifelong learning through fiscal instruments for the first time recognized by the Ministry of Finance;
- supporting partnerships involving self-governing bodies (e.g. in second chance programmes and other intervention programmes for low skilled people);
- stressing the importance of making the teaching profession more attractive.

Similar to many other policy documents addressing LLL and human resource development as a whole, this document does not contain indicators and/or benchmarks that would turn this document into a controllable set of measures. Thus, Slovakia still lacks a coherent lifelong learning policy. Nevertheless, measures

indicated within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources (Sektorový operacný program Ľudské zdroje) and the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 (Jednotný programový dokument NUTS II Bratislava cieľ 3) have led to the development of concrete measures in support of VET and LLL and in fact replace the specialized lifelong learning paper.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND AS EXPRESSION OF IMPLICIT NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (MoLSAF) became the main stakeholder in the field of VET/LLL through the ESF programming phase. It is the managing authority which empowered the Ministry of Education to implement selected specific measures. The leading role of the MoLSAF also results from the employment agenda; the national employment action plan with its measures is the expression of labour market training policies and continuing vocational education training policies. Partly due to the fact that the MoLSAF policies are EU know-how driven, and employment policy makers and ESF implementing staff are in permanent contact with the European Commission staff and documents, this sector's policies dominate over education policy. The Lisbon strategy and the Copenhagen Declaration are of comparably lesser impact despite the current tendency to strengthen the co-operation in VET and LLL development within the EU.

SOME PROMISING BILATERAL INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

The projects based on the bilateral agreements between governments worth mentioning are as follows:

- “Informatics” (Informatika) aimed at implementation of ICT in VET carried out by ENAIP in Udine and the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania);
- “Linking up for mobility in Europe” aimed at institutional co-operation between Norwegian and Slovak VET institutions (including secondary schools) in agriculture, forestry, wood processing, health, social work, new technologies and telecommunication, and tourism.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Slovakia is fully involved in all community programmes, with Leonardo da Vinci projects decisively supporting bottom-up reforming steps in VET. The importance of mobility is recognised as an important tool for the dissemination and sharing experience. Nevertheless, the volume of mobility and access to other countries' courses and qualifications are limited and as a rule only specific project-based. Slovakia participates in the process of transparency improvement; including the introduction of EUROPASS related documents with the national reference point established at the ENIC/NARIC centre.

More attention also seems to be given to the learning needs of teachers and trainers, despite still their very low remuneration.

In the field of the recognition of competencies and qualifications, co-operation is improving and the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania) and its affiliated multi-partisan expert commissions are working on the adjustment of respective documents.

After years of stagnation, significant improvement is visible in ICT introduction in schools, which should be followed by ICT-supported learning promoted by specific programmes. The ECDL infrastructure is already established, with a set of accredited bodies and specialists placed nationwide.

The most visible weaknesses are the lack of a nationally recognised quality assurance model(s) and slow progress with regard to the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

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