



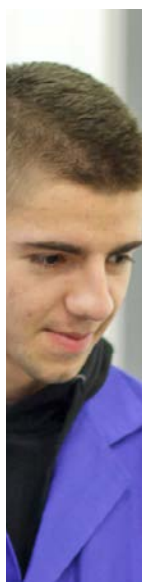
CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
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T H E M A T I C
COUNTRY REVIEWS



APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW SLOVENIA

Putting apprenticeship on track
in Slovenia



SLOVENIA

Apprenticeship review SLOVENIA

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on track in Slovenia

THEMATIC COUNTRY REVIEWS

Please cite this publication as:
Cedefop (2017). *Apprenticeship review: Slovenia.*
Putting apprenticeship on track in Slovenia.
Luxembourg: Publications Office.
Thematic country reviews.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union
is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg:
Publications Office of the European Union, 2017

PRINT

ISBN: 978-92-896-2464-0

doi:10.2801/711265

TI-02-17-828-EN-C

PDF

ISBN: 978-92-896-2465-7

doi:10.2801/715527

TI-02-17-828-EN-N

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Centre Naklo (p.2); SC Nova Gorica: Šolski center Nova Gorica/
School Centre Nova Gorica (cover page); SC Grm: Grm Novo
mesto – center biotehnike in turizma/Grm Novo mesto – Center
of biotechnology and tourism (p.37); SC Velenje: Šolski center
Velenje/School Centre Velenje (cover page, p.13, 18–19, 23, 27,
74–75, 97, 110; Festival kamna Pliskovica/Festival of the Stone in
Pliskovica (cover page)*

*Designed by Missing Element Prague
Printed in the European Union*

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We provide information on and analyses of vocational
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Cedefop was established in 1975
by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

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Foreword

Countries do not just want apprenticeship; they want quality apprenticeships that help address youth unemployment and skill mismatch. This is what Cedefop's thematic country reviews (TCRs) on apprenticeships are all about. Our experience so far has been a win-win situation. Cedefop has achieved better insight into issues at stake in Member States (MS) and with social partners. Our stakeholders have come to a better view of the expertise that Cedefop could share to improve vocational education and training (VET) across European countries.

Since the launch of the European alliance for apprenticeship (EAfA) in 2013 and its reinforcement through a Riga deliverable (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015) aimed at promoting work-based learning (WBL), particularly apprenticeships, European stakeholders and Member States have done much to extend the use of this form of learning by doing. Cedefop launched the first TCRs on apprenticeship in 2014 to support volunteer countries (Malta and Lithuania) in their efforts to establish or improve apprenticeships while increasing the knowledge base on apprenticeship at European level. Since then, Malta has launched new legislation on work-based learning and apprenticeships and Lithuania has developed an action plan for apprenticeship.

Cedefop's TCR methodology relies on a participatory, evolving and iterative approach. Our interaction with stakeholders is one in which learning is reciprocal, where knowledge is challenged and revised, and where participation is open and transparent.

In cooperation with national stakeholders in several countries ⁽¹⁾, we have carried out in-depth reviews, identified strengths and enabling factors, focused on the challenges and developed action points towards quality apprenticeships. The involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries has clearly shown that dialogue among the ministries and social partners improved, that employers and trade unions are finding common ground, and that the gap between education and labour market representatives is narrowing, with each reaching out for synergies and cooperation.

⁽¹⁾ Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia; the TCRs in Croatia and Cyprus and flash-TCRs in Belgium (French-speaking Community) and Sweden started in 2017 and are in progress.

The TCRs make all voices heard, demonstrating the positive attitudes of learners and employers towards apprenticeship and WBL at individual level. Employers who take and train students see benefits in doing so. Learners greatly appreciate their experience in companies, valuing what they gain from interaction with peers, with management and with colleagues who have accumulated relevant work experience. They also value the knowledge and skills acquired, better understanding of what a profession implies and requires, the use of transversal skills, and work discipline. Above all, working in the real world broadens the mind and equips people with knowledge, skills and competences that no book, IT application or traditional class environment can give. Learners have opinions on how VET programmes can be improved and we take these on board when developing suggestions. It is important that such information be accumulated and shared at system level and in society at large, beyond VET. The TCRs bring these individual views to policy- and decision-makers and enrich their understanding of workplaces before designing and implementing policies.

There is no right or wrong moment for TCRs to be launched. Cedefop comes to the countries at different stages and takes the existing situation as a starting point. A TCR is a dynamic and developmental exercise. The TCR in Slovenia came at a time when discussions on apprenticeship had become intense and the preparation and drafting of the new Law on Apprenticeship and related negotiations were under way. Cedefop's team followed the policy development process closely and will continue to do so, organising policy learning activities together with all the countries involved in TCRs.

We believe that the results we make available through this publication will support Slovenian stakeholders, as they continue their structured dialogue and joint efforts to put apprenticeship on track in Slovenia successfully as of school year 2017/18. We hope that Slovenia will use this opportunity also to establish a pathway that would be equally attractive for learners, their parents, companies and educators, a trail that would open opportunities to lifelong learning and career progression. In today's world, there is no ready-made human capital. Self-made skills will probably be in more demand by employers than those learned at school. The skill of learning to learn will increasingly receive much more attention than in the past. Teachers and trainers will play a facilitator role rather than one which imparts knowledge.

This is a natural evolution in education and training, which has come about as a result of technology, mobility (travel) and the proliferation of knowledge.

One of the objectives of the TCRs is for Cedefop to learn from the countries under review. We would like Cedefop's presence to have positive impacts in Member States, with experiences driving Cedefop's future work programmes. In real terms, we have gained a significant amount of in-depth knowledge and better understanding of the situations in the countries reviewed, of the effect of the contextual factors, both historical and contemporary, as well as on national approaches to apprenticeships and work-based learning. We believe that the in-depth information gathered so far will help not only the countries concerned but also others to reflect on their practices and implement reforms for better VET.

People need skills to find jobs: quality apprenticeships are an excellent way to support those who are prepared to learn to fulfil this need. Cedefop will continue to be active in supporting Member States and social partners in creating structures for learning to work.

Joachim James Calleja
Director

Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by Cedefop, Department for learning and employability, under the supervision of Antonio Ranieri. Irina Jemeljanova, Cedefop expert, was responsible for the publication and research conducted from September 2015 to March 2017 under the *Thematic country reviews on apprenticeship* project.

Cedefop would like to acknowledge the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini research team who conducted preliminary analysis and drafted their findings under project team leader Bert-Jan Buiskool and national expert Klara Skubic Ermenc.

The publication was reviewed by Slava Pevec Grm, Cedefop expert, who acted as strategic adviser throughout the TCR.

Special thanks are also due to the members of the steering group coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport who actively participated in validation meetings to discuss project findings and results.

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Executive summary

Executive summary

Cedefop has conducted thematic country reviews (TCR) on apprenticeship since 2014 to support countries that wish to set up or improve the quality of work-based learning (WBL), including apprenticeships. Reviews have taken place in Greece, Italy, Lithuania ^(²), Malta ^(³) and Slovenia; Cyprus, Croatia, and Sweden are currently under review. In TCR, Cedefop applies a methodology that is based on three main principles: a common analytical framework of characteristic features of apprenticeship; an inclusive, participatory and collaborative approach to all stakeholders; and an evolving and iterative approach where surveying of stakeholders is organised in three consecutive rounds.

In Slovenia, apprenticeship had been a typical route to occupations for generations up to the late 1970s when it was discontinued. An attempt to reintroduce it in the 1990s proved unsuccessful. Since 2012, with renewed attention in EU policies and national developments, apprenticeship has been a policy priority for the Slovenian government and the social partners. Their continuing dialogue and work have resulted in the adoption of the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) by the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia on 8 May 2017 ^(⁴), setting up the legal basis for the apprenticeship pathway in the country.

Vocational education and training (VET) in Slovenia is available at several levels; at the upper secondary level, there are two- and three-year vocational programmes and four-year technical programmes ^(⁵). Strengthening WBL and practical training at the workplace (PTW) has been a focus of VET policies in the past 10 years (since 2006 when the VET Act was adopted). PTW is a means of integrating education and training (theory and practice), which is achieved through cooperation among schools, companies and inter-company training centres.

Since apprenticeship does not yet exist, the review examined the organisation of the practical training at the workplace (*praktično*

^(²) Report available at:
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4140>

^(³) Report available at:
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4139>

^(⁴) The legal acts mentioned throughout this review are available in the references section.

^(⁵) Higher vocational education (two-year programmes) is also provided at tertiary level. Training in companies is an important part in these programmes.

usposabljanje z delom, PTW) in three-year vocational education programmes. These programmes include a minimum of 24 weeks of PTW (912 hours or about 25% of the curriculum) and come closest to the definition of apprenticeship used in the TCR. The placement of students in companies is based on two types of contract (individual and collective), and employers are required to meet certain standards (such as verifying that their learning places meet certain criteria and personnel conditions).

According to the new law, apprenticeship can be implemented in these programmes and also in continuing VET for adults.

During the review in Slovenia, 111 VET students and graduates, VET school and enterprise directors, teachers-organisers of practice and mentors from enterprises, parents and youth organisations, social partner and responsible ministry representatives, and experts from national agencies shared their views and experiences in interviews and round-table discussions. A total of 279 companies (81.4% of which employed fewer than 10 people) took part in an online survey.

This report presents the key findings and suggestions for action from the TCR in Slovenia, combined with reflections on the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) that was evolving at the time of the review.

Using analysis of the PTW in school-based programmes, the TCR identified some enablers on which the implementation of apprenticeship can build:

- (a) the existing legislation framework for PTW already sets certain rules and obligations for learners, schools and companies, with which they have been operating. The TCR revealed some inconsistencies in applying these rules but this is generally a good starting point for setting up arrangements for the new pathway;
- (b) there are examples of established cooperation between schools and companies and links with the labour market that can be used as an inspiration for other schools and to inform guidance activities. There is still room for improvement, yet it is a good ground to build on, to share experiences among schools and learn from one another;
- (c) the social partners are involved in VET at strategic level, in the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education and the sector committees for occupational standards. VET programmes are based on occupational standards, developed and upgraded in social partnership. However, social partnerships could play a bigger role in programming and implementing PTW and apprenticeship, especially at regional and local levels, with the participation of branches of chambers and trade unions;

- (d) the competence-based approach in occupational standards, and the learning outcomes defined in all types of upper secondary and higher vocational education programmes ensure coherence of theoretical vocational knowledge, practical skills and key competences;
- (e) all formal upper secondary VET programmes include the general education component, which guarantees the permeability to higher levels of education;
- (f) the 'open curriculum' allows adapting VET programmes to the needs of the local labour market and interests of local companies;
- (g) PTW organisers, a State-funded position in VET schools, have gained valuable experience in coordinating WBL, which can be used for apprenticeship;
- (h) almost all (particularly larger) school centres have organised inter-company training centres enabling their students (and also local companies and adult learners) to improve their technical skills and competences. These centres can potentially play a significant role in ensuring that apprentices acquire all necessary competences, complementing learning in schools and companies;
- (i) quality assurance based on the EQAVET principles could serve as the starting point to embrace the quality of learning in companies in the apprenticeship system.

These enablers can help in putting apprenticeship on track. However, the challenges identified through the TCR signal that the chambers, companies, and schools might not embrace the concept of apprenticeship on a large scale and that implementation of the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) could be difficult. The challenges relate to:

- (a) lack of clear vision and distinction of apprenticeship (as defined in law) from other programmes and pathways that include PTW, especially taking into account the fact that the status of apprentice remained that of a student with some employment benefits (similar to the current provision for school-based programmes);
- (b) limiting the apprenticeship pathway to three-year vocational programmes and continuing vocational and technical education and training;
- (c) some observed non-compliance with existing rules, such as sending students to non-verified training places, which partly linked to unclear division of responsibilities;
- (d) low motivation among companies to take students. In the survey, companies showed some willingness to take students but finding appropriate places for students is still a challenge for some schools, sectors, regions;

- (e) imbalance between high expectations of mentor competences and provision of relevant training;
- (f) funding that mainly comes from the EU-funded projects.

These challenges can stand in the way of implementing apprenticeship as laid out in the law (2017). To address them, the TCR offers an external view on the situation and forward-looking suggestions for action, validated by the steering group.

The review suggests starting with laying the foundation of a clear vision for apprenticeship, accepted by all stakeholders, and its place in the education and training system: why apprenticeship is being reintroduced, what it will look like compared to the current provision of PTW and how it will work. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MoESS) (with overall responsibility for VET) and the social partners should continue dialogue and clarify their expectations.

Once the vision has been agreed, the following building blocks will be needed for quality apprenticeship:

- (a) careful piloting and monitoring, building on the existing knowledge base;
- (b) motivating companies and learners through flexibility and customised support, including improved career guidance;
- (c) enhancing communication, cooperation, coordination among all actors and accepting their responsibilities;
- (d) ensuring that companies have competent mentors;
- (e) developing a sustainable funding model accompanied by non-financial support.

The Law on Apprenticeship (2017) has been adopted and Slovenia finds itself at a crossroads; more decisions need to be taken to make it work to increase youth employment and support adult employability through continuing development of competences. VET stakeholders can take steps towards greater social partner ownership and more decisive participation in all aspects of apprenticeship and VET, from strategic to implementation, financing and monitoring. As the suggestions for action are based on analysis of the PTW in school-based programmes, it is worth considering them to improve the quality of the PTW as well.

The report is addressed first to the national stakeholders, represented in the steering group and by those interviewed, and to a broader audience. Read in conjunction with the reports on Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Malta, the report will provide valuable insights for those interested in learning in more depth about the experience of other countries in setting up apprenticeships.





1. Introduction

Introduction

As part of their strong commitment to reducing levels of youth unemployment, the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS) promote and support the development of policies and programmes to ensure the availability of high quality work-based learning (WBL), including apprenticeships. WBL in general, and apprenticeship in particular, is seen as an effective way of improving smooth and sustainable transitions from school to work (Council of the EU, 2013). By alternating school and work, apprentices develop practical knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market and employer needs. In apprenticeship, learners also develop professional identity and the soft skills (communication, problem solving, judgement, leadership, flexibility, teamwork), which employers often refer to as lacking when they discuss skill mismatches in the labour market. These skills are more difficult to acquire in a traditional school setting.

Under the umbrella of the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA) ⁽⁶⁾, stakeholders across the EU undertake initiatives to improve the quality, supply and image of apprenticeship. The EAfA initiatives are funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), the youth employment initiative, Erasmus+ and other EU funding mechanisms, resources and networks. Apprenticeship systems are included in the national policy plans associated with the Youth guarantee and the Youth employment initiative. The importance of apprenticeship is further emphasised in the Riga conclusions (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015) and the New skills agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2016b) that have drawn attention to the importance of apprenticeships and WBL in connecting young people to the world of work.

Cedefop supports cooperation at European level, among the MS, and interacts with individual countries that wish to foster the development of high quality WBL, including apprenticeships. In 2014, Cedefop started pilot in-depth reviews of the national developments on apprenticeship

⁽⁶⁾ Conceived in 2012, the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA) was launched in July 2013 as a joint initiative by DG Education and Culture and DG employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission, 2015).

in Lithuania and Malta ⁽⁷⁾, the first two countries to volunteer to set their systems to the review, followed by Greece, Italy and Slovenia and, in 2017, Cyprus and Croatia. There are also two pilot flash reviews (a lighter version of the thematic country review (TCR) project) in Belgium (French-speaking Community) and Sweden.

There has been a tradition of apprenticeship in Slovenia, which was a typical training route for many generations up to the late 1970s. Around a quarter of a century later, after Slovenia gained statehood, an attempt was made to (re)introduce apprenticeship, taking the dual systems of Austria, Germany and Switzerland as role models, but it was not successful.

More recently, there has been renewed attention to apprenticeship in Slovenia, driven by the European policy agenda and national developments. Since 2012 apprenticeship has become a Slovenian government priority, resulting in the preparation of the Law on Apprenticeship adopted by the Parliament of Slovenia in May 2017. Since the preparation of the law took place simultaneously with the Cedefop TCR, the TCR started by examining the existing practices of the practical training at the workplace (*praktično usposabljanje z delom*, hereinafter, PTW). Later it followed more closely the developments of the draft law and provided input based on outcomes of the review process. The TCR identified some enablers of the existing practice, on which the implementation of apprenticeship can build, and several challenges related to the common vision of what apprenticeship should encompass (in terms of target groups and types of programme/sector), the status of apprentices, the involvement of enterprises, funding architecture, and trainer competences.

This report presents the key findings and suggestions for action from the TCR in Slovenia, combined with the reflections on the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) that was evolving at the time of the review. The report starts with a short overview of the analytical framework and methodology used throughout the review (Chapter 2) and labour market and

⁽⁷⁾ Reports available at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4139> and
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4140>

VET developments (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, the key review findings are presented following the areas of the Cedefop analytical framework selected for it ⁽⁸⁾. In the absence of apprenticeship programmes at the time of the review, the findings cover the current arrangements for the company-based practical part of three-year vocational programmes. The provisions of the new Law on Apprenticeship (adopted after the end of the TCR process) are presented. The chapter also summarises the enablers and challenges, which Chapter 5 then takes forward to provide suggestions for action to implement the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) and also to improve the current arrangements for PTW in Slovenia.

⁽⁸⁾ Place in the education and training system; governance structures; training content and learning outcomes; cooperation among learning venues; participation and support to companies; requirement and support to teachers and mentors; financing; quality assurance; apprentice working and learning conditions; responsiveness to the labour market.



2. TCR rationale and methodology

TCR rationale and methodology

With the thematic reviews, Cedefop supports countries in setting up, modernising or improving the quality of their apprenticeship systems in line with EU policies. The main objectives of the TCRs are two-fold:

- (a) to analyse the existing situation in the country, using methodology specifically designed for the purpose, to identify enablers and challenges characteristic to the national context, and develop a set of policy pointers for ensuring quality apprenticeships;
- (b) to increase the evidence base at European level that can support policy- and decision-makers across Europe and, possibly beyond, in designing and implementing policies and measures for quality apprenticeships; also to support comparison across countries.

The TCR methodology relies on three key principles:

- (a) using a common analytical framework; this includes characteristic features that are present, to varying extent and in different combinations, in existing (well-functioning) apprenticeship systems. The framework does not offer a single model example but is based on various models and systems that work. The features identified in the framework are not seen as ‘necessary conditions’; the framework is purely an analytical tool. The analytical framework is based on three distinguishing features of apprenticeship and comprises 10 areas of analysis that are operationalised into detailed explanatory descriptors (see Annex for the full framework). These areas and descriptors were used throughout the review as a frame of reference for the data collection, analysis and reporting;
- (b) an inclusive, participatory and collaborative approach and policy learning; this is organised at two levels:
 - (i) steering of the review and validation. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport nominated a steering group that included representatives of the ministry, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Institute for VET, VET providers, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business. The steering group was involved in all project activities, determined priority areas and validated intermediate and final results;

- (ii) stakeholder involvement. At different stages of the review, a broader range of actors, representing stakeholders in the country, was involved (Table 1). More specifically, individuals and groups of relevant stakeholders were involved in in-depth discussions on the strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, solutions and policy, and institutional and organisational implications for apprenticeship systems in the country. During the implementation, a total of 111 persons were interviewed;
- (c) an evolving and iterative approach. The review relies on surveying stakeholders organised in three consecutive rounds of surveys, where each round has its own objectives and informs the following one(s).

Table 1. **Stakeholders involved, by group and number**

Group of stakeholders	Number of persons interviewed
Students	17
Recent graduates	8
VET school directors and deputy directors	11
Organisers of practice	10
Directors of inter-company training centres	2
Company directors or HR managers	17
In-company mentors	6
Ministries	5
Education and training agencies	8
Industry representatives (chambers, employer organisations, sector organisations)	14
Trade unions	6
Public Employment Service	2
Parent organisations	2
Youth organisations	1
Researchers	2
Total	111

Source: Cedefop.

The first-round consultations took place from January to May 2016. This was used to collect factual information from implementation-level stakeholders (practitioners and beneficiaries). The first survey round comprised 71 interviews among students, recently employed graduated, VET school directors, organisers of practice, directors of ITCs, directors of companies and in-company mentors. It concluded with a round table of 10 participants.

Building on the findings of the first round, a second round of consultations was carried out in the summer of 2016, with 24 interviewees. These covered the main bodies in VET: CPI, providers of mentor training, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, employer organisations, trade unions, youth organisations, employment organisations, and experts. This second round was used to discuss the challenges identified in the previous one, and their current and (possible) future role in provision of quality apprenticeships in Slovenia. An online survey of employers was organised with responses from 279 companies, mainly with up to 10 employees (81.4%). Companies with more than 250 employees were the smallest group (1.4%).

The third round of consultations took place in November 2016 and consisted of two round tables with policy-makers, social partners, experts and other system level actors to discuss possible solutions and recommendations. The first round table included six representatives from ministries, while the second included 10 representatives from stakeholders, chambers, trade unions, and the employment agency. The outcomes of these three survey rounds are integrated into the relevant sections of this report.



3. Context

Context

3.1. Labour market

Unemployment for those aged 15 to 24 rose from the beginning of the crisis in 2008 and peaked in 2013 at 21.6%. Since 2014, it has been declining: in 2016, it was 15.2%, still high compared to the overall rate (7.6% for persons 25 to 64 years old), but below the EU average (Table 2). The spring 2017 economic forecast for Slovenia points to positive developments in economic growth and to decreasing unemployment: according to the forecast, unemployment is expected to decline to 6.3% in 2018, approaching the natural rate (European Commission, 2017). At the same time, the recent OECD economic outlook for Slovenia points to initial signs of shortages in some occupations ⁽⁹⁾.

Table 2. **Unemployment rate in Slovenia and EU, by age, 2007-16**

Country	Year									
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Young people (15-24 years old)										
SI	10.1	10.4	13.6	14.7	15.7	20.6	21.6	20.2	16.3	15.2
EU-28	15.7	15.6	19.9	21.0	21.7	23.2	23.7	22.2	20.3	18.7
Adults (25-64 years old)										
SI	6.1	6.0	7.6	8.3	8.4	9.2	9.6	9.1	8.4	7.6
EU-28	4.3	3.7	5.2	6.7	7.6	8.0	9.4	9.1	8.5	7.6

Source: Eurostat – Employment and unemployment data 2016 (labour force survey).

The employment situation of young people remains high on political and policy agendas in Slovenia and the government has prepared strategies to deal with it (MoLFSAE0, 2014; Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia and MoLFSAE0, 2013 and 2015).

⁽⁹⁾ See OECD economic forecast summary for Slovenia (June 2017):
<http://www.oecd.org/eco/outlook/slovenia-economic-forecast-summary.htm>

According to Cedefop forecasts ⁽¹⁰⁾, in the years to come most job opportunities (around 33%) will be for professionals active in high level occupations such as in science, engineering, healthcare, business and teaching; this is much higher than the 24% forecast for this group as a whole in the EU. This means, that most job opportunities in Slovenia will require high-level qualifications (ISCED 97: levels 5 and 6). Nevertheless, high replacement demand, resulting from an ageing society, globalisation and technological development, means there will also be significant numbers of job opportunities requiring medium-level qualifications (ISCED 97: levels 3 and 4).

3.2. Economic sectors

The Slovenian economy has struggled with an economic recession since 2008, when GDP fell by 7.8%. After a period of weak economic growth in 2010 and 2011, the country fell back into recession in 2012. In 2012 and 2013 GDP fell again (by 2.7% and 1.1% respectively) (Eurostat, 2015). Currently, the economic forecast predicts steady recovery: 3.3% GPR growth forecast for 2017 and 3.1% for 2018 (European Commission, 2017).

In 2015, 191 863 enterprises were registered in Slovenia, employing 686 464 persons (Table 3). The most dynamic sector between 2010 and 2015 was 'electricity, gas and steam', where the number of companies increased by 143.9%. During this period the number of companies in the education sector (mostly training in areas such as sport and driving schools) increased by 57.8%, by 49.2% in 'other business activities', 45.5% in 'agriculture, forestry and fishing'. The number of companies in 'information and communication' increased by 40.6% between 2010 and 2015. Negative growth or decline was recorded in construction (-10.6%), mining (-10.3%) and financial and insurance activities (-6%). The number of companies remained stable in this period in several sectors: 'public administration and defence, compulsory social security'; 'activities of households as employers'; 'undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use'; and 'offshore business organisations and bodies'.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See online data and results of Cedefop's skills forecast: Forecasting skill demand and supply: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/forecasting-skill-demand-and-supply/data-visualisations>

Table 3. **Number of companies per sector, 2010-15**

Code	Economic sector (by NACE classification)	2010	2015	Difference in %
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2 094	3 047	45.5%
B	Mining and quarrying	116	104	-10.3%
C	Manufacturing	17 605	19 348	9.9%
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	636	1 551	143.9%
E	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	385	439	14.0%
F	Construction	22 245	19 878	-10.6%
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	25 318	27 176	7.3%
H	Transportation and storage	9 147	8 805	-3.7%
I	Accommodation and food service activities	8 697	11 416	31.3%
J	Information and communication	6 243	8 776	40.6%
K	Financial and insurance activities	2 225	2 091	-6.0%
L	Real estate activities	2 201	2 709	23.1%
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	24 033	31 881	32.7%
N	Other business activities	4 888	7 295	49.2%
O	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	2 199	2 189	-0.5%
P	Education	3 817	6 024	57.8%
Q	Human health and social work activities	4 218	4 884	15.8%
R	Arts, entertainment and recreation	11 326	13 181	16.4%
S	Other activities	18 566	21 069	13.5%
Total		165 959	191 863	

Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Slovakia (2017 data).

The number of employees has mostly grown between 2010 and 2015 in several sectors: 'other business activities', which includes areas such as renting of sports equipment, of video tapes and disks, construction machinery and equipment rental and leasing; 'security systems'; and 'temporary employment agency' (Table 4). In these areas, employment in enterprises increased by 25.2%. In 'activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use', the number of employees rose by 9.6%, and in 'health and social work' by 9.5%. The largest

decline in employment over the same period was recorded in construction, which declined by 31.3%, mining, where employment fell by 15.6%, and 'financial and insurance activities' (a decline of 10.2%). In 'electricity, gas and steam' and 'professional, scientific and technical activities', the number of employees was stable in the years 2010 and 2015.

Table 4. **Number of employees per economic sector, 2010-15**

Code	Economic sector (by NACE classification)	2010	2015	Difference in %
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	4 723	4 530	-4.1%
B	Mining and quarrying	2 893	2 442	-15.6%
C	Manufacturing	177 027	175 941	-0.6%
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	7 760	7 777	0.2%
E	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	8 974	9 263	3.2%
F	Construction	61 292	42 125	-31.3%
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	101 239	96 527	-4.7%
H	Transportation and storage	42 018	44 363	5.6%
I	Accommodation and food service activities	28 264	28 066	-0.7%
J	Information and communication	20 572	21 160	2.9%
K	Financial and insurance activities	23 421	21 036	-10.2%
L	Real estate activities	3 971	3 603	-9.3%
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	38 740	38 936	0.5%
N	Other business activities	24 177	30 264	25.2%
O	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	51 447	47 937	-6.8%
P	Education	63 245	65 242	3.2%
Q	Human health and social work activities	51 503	56 398	9.5%
R	Arts, entertainment and recreation	10 530	10 422	-1.0%
S	Other activities	8 213	7 936	-3.4%
T	Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	513	562	9.6%
Total		730 522	686 464	

Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia (2017).

3.3. Enterprise size

Most enterprises in Slovenia (99.8%) were SMEs (fewer than 250 persons employed), with 90.4% being micro enterprises, with fewer than 10 employees (Table 5). In 2015, professional, scientific and technical activities accounted for 15.7% of SMEs, followed by wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (14.8%), construction (11.2%) and other service activities (10.9%). Large enterprises were mostly in manufacturing (32.4%), followed by wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles and public administration and defence, compulsory social security (10.6%).

According to European Commission data from 2016 ⁽¹⁾, 62.6% of the value added of the business economy originated from SMEs, around five percentage points more than in the EU. SMEs in Slovenia also accounted for some 72% of employment in 2015, compared to the EU figure of about 67%.

Table 5. **Enterprises in Slovenia: basic figures (2015 estimated)**

Type of enterprises	Number of enterprises			Number of employees		
	Slovenia		EU-28	Slovenia		EU-28
	Number	%	%	Number	%	%
Micro (fewer than 10 employees)	124 746	94.8	92.8	206 921	35.2	29.5
Small (10-49 employees)	5 482	4.2	6.0	105 413	17.9	20.2
Medium (50-249 employees)	1 082	0.8	1.0	112 535	19.1	17.0
Total SMEs	131 310	99.8	99.8	424 869	72.2	66.8
Large (250 and more employees)	224	0.2	0.2	163 205	27.8	33.2
Total	131 534	100.0	100.0	588 074	100.0	100.0

Source: European Commission: SME performance review web page:
<https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/performance-review-2016>

⁽¹⁾ European Commission's SME performance review.
<https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/performance-review-2016>

3.4. VET in Slovenia

3.4.1. Historical context

A conceptual design for a VET system in Slovenia was developed in 1996, based on the following principles: social partnership and the alternating training system; basic VET for all; development of alternative paths ⁽¹²⁾; and setting up a complete VET pathway, including post-secondary and tertiary levels, for each occupation field. The system developed according to these principles has, until today, maintained the same structure. Two forms of alternation were introduced: a dual system and the school-based system of teaching vocational and technical skills (at upper and post-secondary levels of education), which also included on-the-job training. In both cases, responsibilities for providing education were partially delegated to employers: individual contracts were signed in the dual system while collective contracts were signed in the school-based version. Three-year and lower vocational programmes were organised in both options; four-year and higher vocational programmes only in the school-based form.

Evaluations in the 1990s showed that reforms had only partially succeeded, with weak links between theoretical and practical learning pointed out (CPI, 2007). Reform was launched in 2001, with novel aspects such as the introduction of occupational standards, modularisation of VET programmes, competence-based approach, open curriculum and links to the national vocational qualifications (NVQ) system ⁽¹³⁾. The reform resulted in the adoption of the new Vocational Education and Training Act (hereafter, the VET Act) in 2006.

With this act, the dual system was abolished, though the reasons for its abolition are not clear; there was no extensive research conducted on this issue. It seems that VET was generally perceived as only a form of education and training and was not associated with employment. One of the reasons for reduced employer interest might also have rested in the fact that companies were not prepared to cooperate in a system where

⁽¹²⁾ People have to be given an opportunity to obtain the same profession by taking different paths, depending on their interests and life situation.

⁽¹³⁾ Established with the National Vocational Qualifications Act (2000), the NVQ system was conceived as an additional path to validation and certification of competences acquired at the workplace. The system is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Candidates are awarded a certificate and obtain an NVQ giving access to an occupation, while their education level does not change. Certificates and educational programmes are both based on occupational standards, which link the school and the NVQ system (Šlander, 2007).

most vocational (practical) part of the curriculum was covered in school laboratories and workshops, instead of in companies (Klarič et. al., 2012, Medveš, 2013).

The issue of strengthening WBL and learning at the workplace has remained important in policy discourse since 2006 and better solutions have been sought. The topic attracted renewed interest after 2012, when the European Commission, supported by Cedefop, recognised apprenticeship and work-based learning as one of the key tools to address the issues of skills shortages and the reduction of high unemployment among young people in Europe (European Commission, 2012b). Apprenticeship has become one of the Slovenian government's priorities, resulting in the preparation of the new Law on Apprenticeship. In December 2016, a draft law was tabled in the Parliament and adopted in May 2017. The provisions of the law are discussed in more detail in Section 4.11.

3.4.2. Types of vocational education programme

The main types of vocational education and training programmes are presented below: formal upper secondary education that typically involves students between the ages of 15 and 18; master craftsman, foreman and managerial examinations; and higher vocational education programmes.

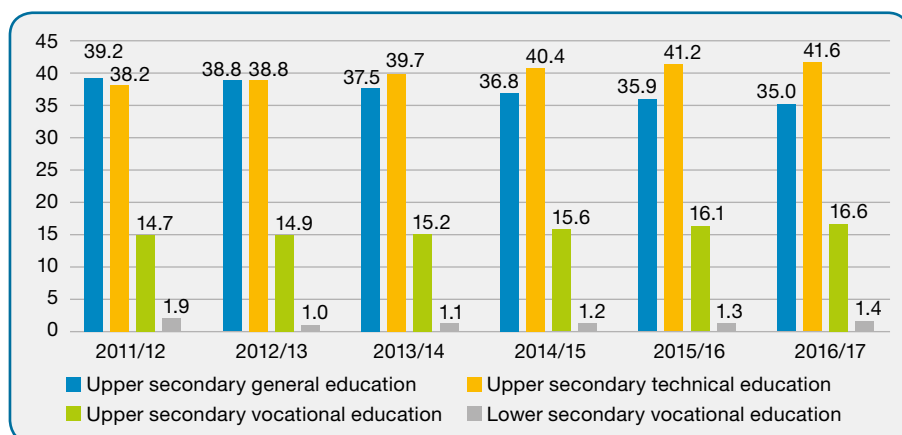
3.4.2.1. Formal upper secondary education that involves students aged 15 to 18
The Slovenian system of secondary (initial) VET is characterised by four types of education programme:

- (a) four-year upper secondary technical education comprises 240 credits (ECVET). The programmes are broadly designed (they include 40% general subjects and professional modules and practical training). Candidates obtain a secondary technical qualification and a vocational degree (*matura*) that gives access to higher vocational and higher professional education. The ease of transition to university courses from secondary vocational and technical education is ensured through the possibility of taking an additional subject from the general *matura* examination;
- (b) three-year upper secondary vocational education prepares students for broader vocational fields. Programmes have practical guidance and include 30% of general subjects; they last three years and comprise 180 credits. On passing the final examination, students obtain a final examination certificate and can continue their education in a two-year programme of vocational/technical education or take employment;

- (c) two-year upper secondary vocational and technical education serves as a bridging course, building on secondary vocational education, and enables students who have successfully completed secondary vocational education to attain vocational *matura* and secondary technical qualifications. This is the so-called '3 + 2' system representing the alternative to the technical education path. Programmes include 50% of general subjects, last two years and comprise 120 credits;
- (d) short secondary vocational education (two years) comprises 120 credits. It is intended for students who have fulfilled at least the seventh year of the nine-year elementary programme, or have completed elementary school under an adapted programme. The emphasis is on practical lessons, underpinned by technical and theoretical content: 30% general subjects, 50% vocational subjects, 20% practical training at the workplace. On passing the final examination, students obtain a final examination certificate. They are qualified to pursue less demanding occupations, while at the same time they can continue their education in secondary vocational education programmes.

Figure 1 presents trends in enrolment in upper secondary education between the years 2011/12 and 2016/17. It highlights increasing participation in all formal VET programmes, a trend arising after the economic crisis started; before this the trend was a reduction in all VET programmes.

Figure 1. **Percentage of students enrolled in different types of upper secondary education in 2011-17**



Source: SURS (2016). <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/News/Index/5872>

3.4.2.2. *Master craftsman, foreman and managerial examinations*

These are intended for candidates who have completed upper secondary vocational education and have at least three years of relevant work experience. The examination comprises four parts: a practical unit, a specialised theoretical unit, a business and economics unit, and a pedagogical-andragogical unit. On passing the master craftsman, foreman or managerial examination, which tests the ability of the candidate independently to manage a plant or shop, pursue a master craftsman's trade and provide practical instruction to learners, candidates obtain a master craftsman/foreman/shop manager certificate and upper secondary technical qualification. Based on examinations passed in the general education subjects of the vocational *matura*, candidates can continue their education at short-cycle higher vocational schools and professional colleges. These examinations come under the competence of trade chambers.

3.4.2.3. *Higher vocational education programmes*

Higher vocational education is regulated by the Higher Vocational Education Act (2004). It is aimed at students who have passed the vocational or general *matura*, and at candidates who have passed the master craftsman/foreman/shop manager examination, three years' work experience and a test of knowledge of general education subjects at the level required for the vocational *matura* in secondary technical education. These practically oriented programmes, based on occupational standards, last two years and comprise 120 credits (ECTS). On successful completion of the higher vocational programme, students obtain a diploma of higher vocational education. Graduates can continue their education at the first level (first cycle) of tertiary education or can take up employment.

The new Law on Apprenticeship (2017) sets apprenticeship as a form of education in upper secondary vocational education (three-year programmes) and in continuing vocational and technical education (Article 1). 'Apprentice' can be a person enrolled in an upper secondary vocational education programme that is provided in the apprenticeship form or a person, unemployed or employed, who is enrolled in part-time programme aiming to achieve an upper secondary vocational or further vocational/technical qualification or to get retrained (Article 5).



4. Practical training at the workplace: current arrangements

Practical training at the workplace: current arrangements

The following sections discuss findings from the TCR (mainly interviews and round-table discussions with stakeholders) according to the areas of analysis. The steering group of the TCR in Slovenia selected the following areas as priorities for the review ⁽¹⁴⁾: governance structures; training content and learning outcomes; cooperation amongst learning venues; participation and support to companies; requirement and support to teachers and mentors; financing; quality assurance; apprentice working and learning conditions; and responsiveness to the labour market. The place in the education and training system was seen as a transversal area.

The findings refer to the arrangements of the practical training at the workplace (PTW) that comprises an integral part of all three-year upper secondary vocational education programmes ⁽¹⁵⁾, unless stated otherwise.

4.1. Place of the PTW in the ET system

VET, of which practical training in workplace is an integral part, is regulated by several legal acts and regulations; the two main ones are the VET Act (2006) and the Higher Vocational Education Act (2004). The acts conceptualise PTW as a means of integrating education and training (theory and practice), which is achieved through cooperation among schools, companies and intercompany training centres. Student placement uses two types of contracts (individual and collective), and employers are required to meet standards such as verifying that their learning places meet certain criteria and personnel conditions ⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁴⁾ As the draft Law on Apprenticeship was only evolving at the time of the TCR, it is not surprising that the SG selected almost all areas of the analytical framework.

⁽¹⁵⁾ The provisions for the apprenticeship pathway have been evolving as the TCR progressed.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Besides these two acts, several other pieces of legislation regulate different areas related to PTW. The most relevant of these are addressed in further detail in the following sections, discussing more specific thematic areas.

Despite the absence of formal apprenticeship, there are two apprenticeship-type programmes in formal education that approximate the Cedefop definition:

- (a) vocational upper secondary education programmes (three-year programmes), which include a minimum of 24 weeks of PTW (912 hours or around 25% of the curriculum);
- (b) higher vocational education programmes (two-year programmes, tertiary education, ISCED-2011: level 5), which include 800 hours or 40% of PTW (Higher VET Act, 2004, Article 50; Guidelines for the preparation of educational programmes of lower and upper secondary VET and secondary VET programmes, 2016).

The overall length of the PTW is defined by an education programme, so slight variations in the proportion of PTW can occur: as an example, gastronomy has 1 102 hours of PTW in total. More important, current arrangements in vocational upper secondary programmes allow for substantial increase in the PTW, up to 53 weeks of 111 weeks of education in total. This can happen if a school agrees with a company, in which case the development of all vocational competences is transferred from schools to companies. Such arrangements are also possible if students sign individual contracts with companies. Both practices are rare, the reasons behind it being twofold: first, schools do not trust companies enough and do not want to endanger the jobs of teachers; second, the companies find PTW too cumbersome, not fully related to their needs, or too big a responsibility. Even in the last two years, during which the Ministry of Education Science and Sport (MoESS) has supported individual agreements, it rarely happens that companies agree to take on a student for more than 24 weeks (Lenič, 2016). This is an important signal for apprenticeship, built on the idea of 50% of learning to take place at the workplace, and shows modest company interest in taking up students. This reinforced by the fact that only 48.9% of companies participating in the online survey, which currently train students, are willing to employ well-performing participants after completion of the training. Companies often report that they take students only to help schools ensure PTW for their students.

Apprenticeship as a special type of VET programme does not exist in Slovenia. On the positive side, apprenticeship (or larger proportion of PTW) will not cause problems in permeability and transferability because the proportion of general education subjects will remain the same; on the negative side, the apprenticeship route may not be able to respond to labour

market needs because companies may not be able to cover all expected learning outcomes (all the occupational standards). Permeability and transferability of learning outcomes are a crucial concern of the MoESS, and schools defend the 'equal educational standard of both routes' (meaning equal qualification with the same learning outcomes). The chambers are in favour of flexibility and responsiveness and so defend the possibility of difference in standards (more on the topic of equal standard follows in Section 4.3.).

The social perception of the three-year vocational education programmes also needs to be taken into consideration. Stakeholders agreed that the social perception of vocational programmes and vocational schools is relatively low. Student and parent organisations found this a key issue, as did experts. Parents thought that three-year vocational programmes might be more attractive to families of lower social brackets, hence why many middle-class parents avoid these programmes. Some students reported that sometimes their parents' views were even against their interests and wishes. This belief is supported by the fact that the average income of employees grows with increasing education level. There is a large leap in average salary between ISCED 3B and ISCED 3A levels with even larger difference between ISCED 3 and ISCED 5 levels (Medveš et al., 2008). The problem of the low social image of three-year VET should be tackled on all fronts but could be aided by better career guidance and counselling, plus better positions and pay on the labour market (more in Section 4.9.1.). Encouragingly, the proportion of the young people enrolling in three-year programmes has recently improved, reports the MoESS.

4.2. Governance structures

Distribution of responsibilities among central administration, social partners, companies and schools is the second most challenging issue in establishing apprenticeship in Slovenia, after the status of apprentices; this especially concerns apprenticeship compared to the current arrangements for PTW.

The main finding from interviews and round-table discussions on governance structure is that roles and responsibilities have not been entirely thought through and are not based on consensus. Social partnership is in place de jure, but is not always functioning well: this is not just because of gaps in regulation, but mostly because so many aspects are taken for granted or work on oral agreements or personal contacts. The chambers

and trade unions feel they are not equal partners to the MoESS and schools, but are willing to be such. On the face of it, these stakeholders recognise the importance of apprenticeship but their understanding of it is superficial. Nor is there agreement on one coordination and decision-making body.

The current key responsibilities of all stakeholders are presented below:

- (a) the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has the authority to formulate and implement education policies and create system regulations. The experts and the CPI indicated that the strong position of the ministry responsible for vocational education reflects the dominating school-based model of VET;
- (b) the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLFSAE) shares responsibility with the MoESS for providing VET. It announces occupational standards and catalogues of vocational knowledge and skills in the NVQ certification system;
- (c) the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology formulates the *Rules on the verification and on keeping the register of learning workplaces and on the removal from the register*, and defines the conditions to be met by employers who wish to take students. The ministry also provides financial support to employers who take students with individual learning contracts; the procedures are not transparent, as the TCR showed;
- (d) sector committees for occupational standards (comprising experts and representatives of chambers, ministries, and trade unions) discuss initiatives, determine priorities in the development of occupational standards, and propose experts to prepare occupation profiles, occupational standards and catalogues of knowledge and skills for NVQs. The current definition of vocation leads to a situation in which some occupational standards are broad (describe a vocation) and some narrow (describe a job);
- (e) the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education (comprising experts appointed by government and nominated by ministries, chambers and trade unions) is the main expert body to guide the development of VET as a whole in the country. The council adopts the methodology for the preparation of occupational standards and catalogues, proposes occupational standards and catalogues for NVQs for adoption by the minister responsible for labour, proposes education programmes for adoption by the minister responsible for education, adopts strategies;

- (f) chambers, associations of employers, occupational associations, NGOs, trade unions, ministries having jurisdiction over VET give initiatives for new occupational standards and catalogues. They also propose members to sector committees (point (d) above) and propose members of the Council of Experts for VET (point (e) above) and its bodies;
- (g) trade unions cooperate in determining priorities in developing occupational standards. They propose experts to prepare profiles, standards and catalogues of vocational knowledge and skills; and appoint representatives to serve on examination committees. Trade unions conduct their formal roles, but are generally not very active in VET. Their main problem is that they lack their own education strategy/agenda. Some representatives suggest that the lack of education strategy caused the chambers to take the lead in apprenticeship development. Some even state that true dialogue among social partners is missing. The education, science and culture trade union's position was that mentors in companies need to have education at least at technician level. They also tried to defend the position of the practice teachers who might lose their job if apprenticeship becomes widespread;
- (h) the chambers under public authorisation ⁽¹⁷⁾ are obliged to organise PTW and cooperate in managing ITCs. They cooperate with schools on vocational and career guidance and the open curriculum. Chambers are also obliged to: ascertain if companies fulfil the conditions for the implementation of PTW; manage the registry of learning places in companies and the registry of individual and collective contracts; supervise the implementation of PTW; organise the intermediate student examinations; cooperate with schools on the practical parts of final examinations or vocational *matura*.

Verification of learning workplaces is conducted by the chambers under public authorisation, and they are responsible for the quality control and assurance of PTW. However, division of responsibilities between chambers and schools is not clear or agreed because there are also schools that are responsible for providing learning workplaces for their students. Cooperation between schools and chambers (as well as between companies and chambers) is often weak. Non-compliance with procedures also seems to be an important challenge. Chambers indicated that they see themselves as key partners to companies in

⁽¹⁷⁾ These are the Chamber of Craft and Small Business (*Obrtna zbornica Slovenije*), the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (*Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije*); and the Chamber of Commerce (*Trgovinska zbornica Slovenije*).

future apprenticeship programmes. They do not convincingly explain how they will perform this task since their capacity and current activities are limited. Chambers agree that three-year vocational education programmes are suitable for the apprenticeship route but do not provide clear explanations. They oppose the status of apprentice;

- (i) some chambers without public authorisation express interest in cooperation, some already cooperate. There are disagreements among the chambers regarding the role of chambers without public authorisation;
- (j) schools must provide training workplaces in companies for enrolled students. They select from national catalogues of learning outcomes (alone or in cooperation with companies) competences/learning objectives which are to be achieved during PTW. These learning outcomes should be explicitly listed in training plans (addendum to learning contract), yet the preparation of training plans is often a formality (if it happens at all); there are cases of good practice, however. The system relies on the initiative of schools and their abilities to attract and cooperate with companies. The main approach to attracting employers is through personal contacts.

Schools are generally motivated, have human resources and know-how; however, the interviewees (particularly the chambers) did not see schools as crucial partners in the implementation of apprenticeship. Schools were seen by most stakeholders as institutions which must provide quality general knowledge and sound theoretical background and should also help chambers in motivating companies to take on apprentices; however, stakeholders believed that they should not take the leading role in apprenticeship;

- (k) ITCs are organised as units of VET school centres. They organise PTW, and also prepare candidates for master craftsmen, foremen and managerial examinations, and for NVQ certification. They also carry out the practical part of final exams and the vocational *matura*. They conduct training for companies to meet the needs of technological change in work processes and to increase the competitiveness. They are under-regulated, but school centres seem satisfied with their 'open' status, while companies and chambers are not. It is not clear how they could be integrated into an apprenticeship system but they might play a role.

Many stakeholders (particularly school representatives) agreed that ITCs could be useful in case apprentices do not have the opportunity to develop all competences at their workplace. They however also indicated that ITCs – in spite of having modern technology – cannot

provide apprentices with authentic work situations. Chambers were particularly cautious, saying that ITCs should not play a major role and should be used mostly by students in school-based VET. Some (the representative of the Slovenian trade union confederation, experts, and the CPI representative) argued that ITCs should not be part of school centres, but should be organised by companies and/or chambers. It is acceptable that the government provide some financial resources for their functioning, but they said that the main financial source should come from the economy side. ITCs were created using ESF and State funds and most have turned to profitable activities. Also, schools no longer build their own workshops;

- (l) the Employment Service of Slovenia finances programmes which prepare candidates for the acquisition of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for the unemployed, and financially supports adults in gaining formal education. The place of PTW in these programmes is under-researched;
- (m) companies must meet certain material and HR conditions: they are obliged to enable students to gain vocational competence, to provide remuneration, to control students' activities, and inform them about safety regulations. Students are medically insured. Mentors in companies are supposed to be familiar with the relevant modules, and organise students' training according to the aims defined in them. Companies sometimes do not pay the financial award, but systemic record of such conduct is not being kept;
- (n) the CPI is a competent expert service for VET and the main research and development body for VET. The CPI coordinates a working group of teachers and other stakeholders that is in charge of designing VET programmes. The CPI conducts monitoring activities, evaluations, and studies;
- (o) student responsibilities are to accomplish planned learning activities, regularly attend school, obey school and employer regulations, safeguard professional secrets, and obey safety rules;
- (p) the Institute for Adult Education is the main national institution for research and development, quality and education, guidance and validation, and promotion and information activities in adult education ⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Andragoški center Republike Slovenije (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education):
http://www.acs.si/about_siae

4.3. Training content and learning outcomes

Slovenia has competence-based occupational standards and social partners are involved in their development ⁽¹⁹⁾. To meet the changing demands of the labour market, they are updated at least every five years. Despite this, there are questions on the occupational standard concept (how broad it should be) and the relationship between an occupational standard and a vocational education programme. The latter is directly linked to disagreements about the training content for the potential apprenticeship route. All formal upper secondary and higher vocational education programmes in Slovenia are built on occupational standards; usually one programme rests on more than one standard and each includes also general education subjects and other elements ⁽²⁰⁾. Consequently, many programmes are broad ⁽²¹⁾. The chambers particularly see this programmes breadth as an obstacle to establishing apprenticeship: it might prevent companies training learners as they might not master all the occupations. It may also contradict company needs: they may, for example, need a waiter, but not a cook. This challenge is confirmed by schools and company representatives, highlighting that, in the current system, many companies are not able to fulfil all the tasks.

Nevertheless, both ministries and education sector stakeholders indicate that VET programmes and apprenticeships need to be broad, maintaining the same 'educational standard' as the school-based path, meaning that both routes lead to the same formal qualification and cover the same learning outcomes. They fear that the permeability of the system (ability to move easily from VET education to higher education) will be hindered otherwise, which will also discourage people from applying for apprenticeship places. This is a point of disagreement between the chambers and the education side.

Lack of adequate education programmes is also one factor hindering the development of apprenticeship. The online survey shows that more than

⁽¹⁹⁾ 10 sector committees were appointed by the minister responsible for labour to manage the development of occupational standards (Vocational Education and Training Act, 2006, Article 18). The standards are confirmed by the competent Expert Council and are referred to the minister responsible for labour for adoption.

⁽²⁰⁾ The structure of these programmes is defined by the *Starting points for development of educational programmes in secondary VET* (2001 amended in 2016). *The Starting points* also define the proportion of PTW in each type of programme. VET programmes are designed by the CPI, the Expert Council for VET confirms them and the minister responsible for education adopts them.

⁽²¹⁾ One typical example of such a broad VET programme was given by a chamber: the VET system does not provide programmes in cooking, waiting, etc. but incorporates standards for these occupations in one broad VET programme (gastronomy).

56% of the companies who do not take students in PTW agree or strongly agree that lack of adequate education programmes in their area of work is a reason for not providing practical training place for students. More than 87% of them also agree or strongly agree that the level of knowledge and skills of the students they get is low and not aligned with company needs. The survey amongst enterprises and company interviews indicate that the mismatch between their expectations and actual student skills is a problem to be further investigated and tackled.

In principle, the content, duration, and expected outcomes of company- and school-based learning are clearly distributed and form a coherent sequence, which is provided by the structure of VET programmes. The programmes are divided into modules (each covering a set of competences); a module represents a complete unit of learning objectives bringing together theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Organisers of practice and in-company mentors report that a school (in theory together with companies, in reality the practices vary) selects certain learning objectives from syllabi and include them into training plans for PTW.

Many companies and organisers of practice believe that the preparation of these training plans is a mere formality because it is not realistic to expect that the companies will follow the training plans strictly. Expecting that companies would operate as schools is not considered a productive approach; that is why it is important that company representatives are involved in preparing programmes for apprenticeship. Despite these difficulties and lack of transparency, students interviewed were generally very happy with the PTW and reported that they learned many new and useful things from it (work organisation, teamwork, practical skills, managing time pressure).

Directors of ITCs and schools indicate that ITCs can and do play a role of supporting schools and companies in teaching learners what they cannot learn at school or in company. However, there is no common understanding of the ITC role and the chambers and some companies openly reject the cooperation with them (see also Section 4.7.).

There are provisions for adjusting parts of curricula to local labour market needs. The main tool for the schools is the 'open curriculum': the State is responsible for defining 80% of the programme and the remaining 20% is determined by schools in cooperation with companies. The evaluations carried out by the CPI show that some schools are successful in attracting companies for such cooperation, but some design open curriculum components for other educational purposes, such as providing additional learning support to students or covering topics which are closer to teachers'

expertise. Realisation of the core idea of the open curriculum depends on individual contexts and prevents it being fully adopted.

Final assessment covers all learning outcomes, but it is not independent of learning venues. While learning takes place in different learning venues (classrooms, laboratories, school workshops, ITCs, in companies), final assessment is coordinated and implemented by VET schools. Currently, in PTW student assessment has informative and formative nature (oral feedback being most common), and is not taken into account in the final assessment conducted in schools. Schools explain that employers have no legal responsibilities regarding formal assessment of student achievements and that there are no procedures in place doing the formative assessment. The online survey showed that two-thirds (66.7%) of employers are willing to assess student performance at the workplace. While interpreting this result, we need to keep in mind that this was the opinion of those companies who currently train students and have existing arrangements in mind. Interviews with company representatives lead us to conclude that companies are often reluctant to take on more responsibilities, such as assuring and assessing apprentice learning outcomes in the future. They indicated that they wish to motivate students, and do not want the burden of being responsible for the assessment.

Some schools encourage companies to use evaluation lists developed by the CPI, in which they are asked to assess students in categories such as punctuality, rapport with colleagues and superiors, and professional development. Students are required to keep a daily diary. However, it is up to employers to decide whether they make use of the tools. In the case of individual contracts, companies are required to carry out intermediate assessment in the second year, while chambers are required to monitor it. The chambers indicate that they are involved in these activities but that student numbers are low.

4.4. Cooperation among learning venues

Cooperation, coordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the venues is not well defined, and the school dominates the process in most cases. Although the VET law emphasises that schools, companies and chambers are formally responsible for providing PTW, it is generally accepted that schools are the main coordinators. Organisers of practice are crucial people across the process. They take on the main coordinating role

at implementation level: contact companies, help find students appropriate placements, provide mentors and students with all relevant information, conduct the bulk of administrative tasks, and often monitor the PTW. Students and mentors confirm that organisers of practice generally do their job well and receive appreciation. Their work quality depends on the degree of their personal involvement and/or whether the school includes PTW in their quality assurance procedures (see Box 1 for examples of good practice). In some cases, schools and companies manage to build tight and constructive cooperation arrangements and make important decisions together (for example about training plans and selection of students), while in other cases schools struggle to find placements, particularly where there are more students than are actually needed on the labour market, as in the masonry and metal sector. Some schools/school centres have developed cooperation over many decades, related to strong local economy (in energetics for example); some have developed this cooperation more recently (in hospitality and tourism for example). Schools organise annual events which give local companies an opportunity to present their organisation and products; they cooperate in research projects and professionals are invited to prepare lectures for the students. Systematic cooperation seems more likely when it is strongly set in the overarching policy framework at regional, national or sectoral level.

Box 1. Examples of good practice linking to labour market needs

- Some organisers of practice pay visits to companies to ensure good alignment of learning at schools and in companies, they sometimes cooperate with chambers at the local or sectoral level.
- Some schools encourage teachers (also of general education subjects) to visit students during their PTW, and adjust their teaching to the needs of the companies and labour market.

Source: Cedefop.

Companies participating in the online survey indicated that cooperation could be improved, with almost 40% of company representatives replying that better guidance from schools could be helpful. During interviews, some mentors also pointed out that they do not get school feedback on student achievements from the assessments conducted in schools.

Training plans are a formal part of the learning contracts (individual and collective). In the annex to an individual learning contract the company, the student and school agree on the learning outcomes for the company-based part of the training; in the annex to a collective learning contract only the school and company agree on learning outcomes, and the student is informed. Although these responsibilities are clearly defined, practice on the ground seems diverse and in-depth communication and cooperation on the topic of training plans is often missing. This seems to be partially related to the problems discussed in Section 4.3. (not close enough to company needs and capacities), but the interviews indicate it might also be related to the lack of in-depth cooperation, trust and dialogue between school and employers. The lack of dialogue is also reflected in the finding that most schools prepare training plans themselves (without consulting with companies). Some schools, however, regularly communicate about the training content; this depends on mutual willingness and trust and on their views on the importance of such training plans. The TCR discovered that company knowledge on training plan preparation is insufficient.

Students are not involved in preparing the plans, but are usually informed. A monitoring study of the arrangements within the individual contract (Lenič, 2016) confirms findings: training plans are often either not prepared or prepared in a sketchy manner. The findings of the online survey point to limited willingness of companies to play a role in developing training plans: less than one-third (28.3%) of companies are willing to develop individualised training plans for students in cooperation with schools.

Where companies cannot ensure all required learning outcomes, students can combine PTW with learning in available ITCs. The decision is made by schools before the students are sent to companies and depends on specifics of school organisation, availability of appropriate companies in local area, and on the type of programme; it does not generally take into account student progress and achievements ⁽²²⁾. There are no data on proportion of such training nationwide, but our findings indicate that where companies cannot ensure the acquisition of all required learning outcomes, schools cooperate with ITCs. It seems that this is a typical approach in

⁽²²⁾ According to the VET Act (Article 32), 'part of the practical training at workplace can be implemented in ITCs. ITC is organised as an institution, company or organisational unit of the institution, company or other legal entity. ITC, in addition to practical training, can also prepare candidates for master craftsman, foreman and managerial examinations; for certification of NVQs; to carry out the practical part of final exams and the vocational baccalaureate. ITC can also implement training to the needs of technological changes in work processes and to increase the competitiveness of the economy'.

school centres with ITCs; students spend part of their practical training in companies and part in the ITC. Individual schools that are not part of school centres cannot always compensate for that.

The coordinating role for PTW is with the school. The findings indicate that chambers rarely cooperate with schools and/or companies, but express willingness to take on responsibilities in the apprenticeship (Section 4.2.). Even in cases where students sign individual contracts, schools and companies also report that the chambers are not involved much in activities related to the PTW.

Schools and companies report that most administrative tasks are taken care of by the schools, so companies have as little administration load as possible.

4.5. Participation and support to companies

The rights and obligations of companies providing PTW are regulated⁽²³⁾ and do not differ substantially from those envisaged in the Law on Apprenticeship (2017): companies are required to have their learning workplaces verified, proving that they meet certain material and personnel conditions; mentors must be familiar with the relevant programmes, and organise student training according to aims defined in education programme modules. While verification of learning workplaces may seem the first and most important company obligation, many respondents reported that this was not always the case. Among online survey respondents, 67.9% of those who currently train students reported that they have their learning workplaces verified (7.8% have verified some of them, and 8.7% did not know).

Companies are obliged to remunerate students and also have other cost-related obligations (more in Section 4.7.).

Companies are only partly satisfied with their obligations. The online survey results suggest that the general sentiment among the companies is lack of inclination to invest much into the training of the young to meet the lack of skilled workers. The start of apprenticeship would succeed if based on

⁽²³⁾ The rights and obligations of companies providing PTW are regulated in three main documents. The VET Act (Article 35) stipulates rules and conditions for the employer (Article 35, 37, 58). The Employment Relationship Act (2013) (Article 214) defines the minimum age of the worker (14 years) and special measures for the protection of workers under 18 as well as forbids discrimination at work. The rules on the verification and on keeping the register of learning workplaces, and on the removal from the register (2003) set requirements to companies to have verified learning places.

a small group of companies that see training of the young as their task and are willing to hire them in the future. When asked what the companies are willing to contribute to have students in PTW (Table 6), 82.2% of them replied that they are willing to conclude a contract with a student. However, only 70.8% of surveyed companies are willing to provide a qualified mentor and only 64% are willing to cooperate with schools in implementing training plans.

Table 6. **What are you as a company willing to contribute to have students in PTW?**

	Frequency	Per cent (of valid N=219)
Conclude a contract with a student	180	82.2
Provide qualified in-company mentors	155	70.8
Pay wage/salary to a student	150	68.5
Assess students' performance at the workplace	146	66.7
Cooperate with the school in implementing training plans	140	63.9
Select students actively	113	51.6
Employ well performing students after completion of the training	107	48.9
Provide all the administrative support needed	94	42.9
Allocate a share of the working week of the student to training (in alternance to the regular work directly contributing to the production process)	62	28.3
Develop individualised training plans for students in cooperation with schools.	62	28.3
Cover the student's social and health insurance costs.	54	24.7
Inform potential students on occupations offered by your company.	47	21.5
Cover insurance against losses incurred due to accidental damage of equipment by a student.	27	12.3

Source: Cedefop (results from the online survey).

There are no strategies, systematic initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of benefits of taking apprentices. The organisation of PTW relies primarily on the initiatives by schools and their ability to attract companies, with resulting variation in the quality of their cooperation and the exposure of students to the labour market. According to the Rules on the verification (2003), the chambers are in charge of verifying learning places and schools should choose among verified companies. In practice, schools most often do not contact the chambers and do not use the lists of verified training workplaces, but use other channels of communication, such as personal contacts, students' family connections, and company websites. Member companies⁽²⁴⁾ have better support from chambers as well as better access to information on PTW. Non-members only have access to online information. The lack of information was highlighted by the respondents in the online survey: 35.5% of those which currently take students and around 43% of those which currently do not train students lack information on potential to take students for PTW.

The chambers provide general and basic PTW information. Before each school year the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia draws up a manual on PTW with specific information for employers who want to take on students for practical training⁽²⁵⁾. The manual defines verification procedures for a training workplace, the obligations of employers and the possibility of financial incentives offered by the State.

Requirements for companies willing to provide PTW are not clearly defined, which allows for many different interpretations of regulations. One of the basic conditions is verification of a training workplace, conducted by publicly authorised chambers (VET Act, Article 35). Such verification is one of the most controversial issues in current PTW arrangements. The procedures are defined (Rules on verification, 2003, Articles 2 and 3), as follows. After the company applies, it is visited by a three-member commission that checks personnel (appropriate education, work experience and pedagogical-andragogical training) and material conditions (material used in the workplace, equipment, depending on the occupation). The appropriate chamber sets commissions for every occupation. If the conditions are met, competent chamber issues a certificate and the company is included in the register of learning workplaces. This verification is valid as long as the company meets requirements or until it wishes to

⁽²⁴⁾ Membership in chambers is not mandatory in Slovenia.

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://www.ozs.si/Za%C4%8Dlane/Izobra%C5%BEEvalnicenter/Poklicnoizobra%C5%BEEvanje.aspx>

be removed from the registry. However, monitoring after verification is not regular, if takes place at all.

Each year, the employer notifies the relevant chamber about their intention to educate students. Six months before the start of the school year chambers publish ⁽²⁶⁾ an offer or announcement of training workplaces for the next year for vocational upper secondary programmes (VET Act (2006), Article 29). The announcement of a learning workplace includes the method of reporting needs for human resources and communication desire of employers to participate in the practical training of students.

Companies are obliged to inform the chamber if they no longer fulfil the conditions, but there are no reliable data on whether chambers conduct quality controls. No penalties are defined for a company that does not meet the requirements.

Some schools/school centres find these criteria unsatisfactory and even set higher demands for the companies they select for their students. In contrast, some schools do not require companies to have verified learning workplaces. The chambers reported that they follow the rules, but sometimes they take a pragmatic approach because they do not want to discourage companies from accepting students.

Companies receive non-financial support primarily provided by schools (according to the TCR data), and partly from the chambers and the government. Schools provide the documentation for the PTW and inform companies (via emails, phone calls, personal visits, sometimes by organising meetings) on issues related to PTW; some organise pedagogical-andragogical training for mentors (which, as a rule, is the chambers' responsibility) and invite companies to different events. Interviewees indicate that support depends largely on individuals rather than systems and structures in place, leading to different practices and experiences.

Non-financial support from the State for schools and companies is generally assessed as not sufficient, though respondents positively assessed a project in which more than 1 900 mentors were trained between 2012 and 2013. The MoESS reports that a tender for the training of mentors was published during the TCR.

The chambers echo the feedback of companies that non-financial support is needed; trade unions agreed on this point as well. Both the chambers and the trade unions believed that mentors training should be provided by the State. Companies report that they receive more support

⁽²⁶⁾ On their websites; the MoESS provides links to these on its web page too.

from the chambers when they sign individual contracts with the students: they provide information and advice and help organise intermediate examinations.

Almost 40% of companies, taking part in the online survey, (Table 7) report lack of support from schools, compared to around 23% who report lack of guidance from the chambers. This suggests that companies still see schools as their main partner in student training.

The chambers' experience with support to micro and small companies is important in its enabling potential. These companies do not have special HR units and, in many cases, the owners are also managers and deeply engaged in daily work routine, with little time left for issues such as apprenticeship management. A personalised approach is needed, particularly one-to-one and direct communication, which chambers already apply.

The TCR has not identified any activity that would recognise or award companies for successful provision of PTW.

Table 7. What specific non-financial support would your company most need to be further engaged in providing students with PTW?

	Frequency	Per cent (of valid N=217)
Better guidance by schools	85	39.2
Better information on possibilities to take students	77	35.5
Better alignment between education programmes and company needs	68	31.3
Platform to share experiences and award best practices of PTW	54	24.9
Better guidance by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET	50	23.0
Better guidance by chambers	49	22.6
Better information on companies' responsibilities for taking students	48	22.1
Support in recruiting students for PTW, coordinating day-to-day activities	37	17.1
Better training opportunities for in-company mentors	25	11.5
Other	8	3.7
None of the above	7	3.2

Source: Cedefop (results from the online survey).

4.6. Requirements and support to teachers and mentors

For a company to gain the status of a company with verified learning places, it needs to assign a competent and qualified employee to train students (Article 35 of the VET Act). There are requirements for mentor qualification and competences. A mentor should have an appropriate level of education and a qualification to ensure that a student in practical training at the workplace pursues the vocation being studied (Article 35 of the VET Act).

The TCR indicated that some companies believed that mentors do not need special training; only about two-thirds (70.8%) of all companies that presently train students are willing to provide a qualified mentor. This confirms the data gathered from the interviews as well as those presented in some evaluations carried out by the CPI, pointing out the low priority given to the training of mentors.

There are some legal requirements on pedagogical-andragogical competences and training, yet they are no clear procedures in place. While it is generally understood that mentors should have pedagogical-andragogical competences to train students, there is no common agreement on what these competences are and there is no explicitly defined set of such competences. Currently, acquisition of pedagogical-andragogical competences is only linked to taking a training course, followed in some cases by an exam conducted by the provider of the training. However, it is essential to ensure that mentors have such competences and can acquire them in various ways.

The position of regulation and provision of such training is not clear. Pedagogical-andragogical training is the fourth part of the master craftsman examination, the managerial examination and the foreman examination certificate. Where a mentor is a higher or a university education graduate⁽²⁷⁾, he or she has to pass an examination on pedagogical-andragogical knowledge. The elements of such an examination are not clearly defined⁽²⁸⁾. The Small Business Act (Article 21) stipulates that training programmes are

⁽²⁷⁾ In which case he/she is not required to hold master craftsman qualification.

⁽²⁸⁾ The CPI has cooperated with the Chamber of Craft and Small Business and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the preparation of the examination catalogue for the fourth part of the master craftsman's examination, the managerial examination and for the foreman's examination certificate. The catalogue has been approved by the National Expert Council for VET in 2000. It was later revised but now is already outdated. The programme can be accomplished also by those who wish to be mentors in companies. This used to be a 40-hour programme, but it was said it is usually provided in eight or 16 hours at most. Both chambers provide it.

approved by the Minister for Education. Currently, there is one 24-hour programme approved by the MoESS and provided by the chambers. The CPI argues that formal accreditation procedures are not in place; hence the quality of such programmes is not assured. Respondents from schools and companies report that there are several other programmes on the market, but that there is no control or monitoring of these programmes (neither of providers nor lecturers), so their quality is not known. Education institutions sometimes organise short pedagogical-andragogical training by themselves, focusing only on basic factual information on PTW. Often, the chambers and schools that wish to attract companies to take on students for PTW, lower their standards for pedagogical-andragogical training: they do not want to discourage companies from providing PTW. The motivation and the interest of employers, particularly interest in lengthy (and time-consuming) forms of training as promoted by the education side, is still a challenge to be tackled. The CPI is critical of the chambers' practices.

There is no agreement between the MoESS and the social partners on who is responsible for informing schools and companies about such training programmes, nor about the quality assurance of the processes related to training.

Some companies reported that they were not satisfied with the quality of the training provided so far: they saw it as too focused on informing participants about formal issues instead of focusing more on pedagogical and andragogical topics in greater detail. Generally, it was indicated (by representatives of the chambers, the CPI and experts) that mentors should have more knowledge of pedagogy and vocational didactics, but few experts/trainers on vocational didactics are available in Slovenia.

Criteria for pedagogical-andragogical training and competences are much stricter for trainers who conduct practical training at schools. They are required to pass a 180-hour programme for the acquisition of pedagogical-andragogical education. The programme was developed by the CPI in cooperation with the MoESS, and approved by the National Expert council for VET (in 2010). According to the Act on Organisation and Financing of Education, the programme must be accomplished during the first three years of working at the school. The programme is now provided by the Secondary School for Pre-school teachers; the ministry gave public mandate to this school in Ljubljana.

Teacher professional development is far more advanced. In higher VET, teachers are re-nominated every five years, and are required to follow the developments in their field of expertise and produce professional/scientific

outcomes, which should reflect the teachers' continuous development of their technical competences. Many combine work in their profession with teaching, attend trainings and seminars, and cooperate in Erasmus+ exchange programme. Until recently every teacher in higher education needed to pass a comprehensive and State-accredited pedagogical-andragogical course (30 ECTS, provided by University of Ljubljana). A few years ago the law changed and this training is no longer obligatory for teachers. As a result, participation in such training dropped substantially, with a potential negative impact on the quality of teachers' pedagogical and andragogical competences.

Teachers at secondary schools also have opportunities to develop their technical and pedagogical competences during their career. There is a comprehensive system of continuous teacher education, for teachers from pre-primary to upper secondary education, allowing them to take part each year in different workshops, seminars, lectures, and projects that can be related either to technical or pedagogical topics. They are motivated to participate because participation is linked to teacher promotion. The interviews show that directors and principals generally support staff education (they sometimes report that certain topics are made obligatory, such as communication skills, aspects of psychology, classroom management, dealing with violence, social skills), while for other topics teachers are free to decide what kind of course to choose. Some training is organised by the CPI while some schools organise excursions to different technologically developed and successful enterprises. Some VET schools also earn extra money that is subsequently used for teachers' professional development.

School centres and ITCs report that they often organise different education activities for their staff. They wish to improve their teachers' expertise and cooperation with employers and the professional field. Some centres and schools reported they have also participated in the CPI project *The enhancement of teachers' competences*.

Box 2. Job rotation project *The enhancement of teachers' competences*

The project, set up and led by the CPI, had teachers and mentors exchange their roles: teachers worked in companies, and mentors taught at the school. Schools and companies indicated that this project was very effective and there is general consensus that such initiatives should be further supported. Interviewees share only one concern: teachers are usually not interested in exchange with employees from companies, or hesitating in taking part. There are also some formal barriers. People who teach in schools need to be pedagogically qualified, while people who work in companies need to master some specific safety regulations in detail. Some schools interviewed are in the process of preparing a job rotation model. The project has operated in 2016 and 2017.

More information at: <http://www.cpi.si/mednarodno-sodelovanje/ess-mizs.aspx>

Source: Cedefop.

The companies interviewed sometimes indicated that teachers lack up-to-date technological knowledge, teaching about – and with – out-dated technology. This is especially true for individual schools, but less so for school centres: some of the latter are well-equipped. ITCs also provide numerous training programmes targeted at the development of technical competences and offered to teachers as well as employees and employers.

There are no systemic mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between mentors and teachers. The stakeholders reported one successful job rotation project which was positively evaluated by several respondents (Box 2).

4.7. Financing

According to the VET Act (2006, Article 37), companies are obliged to pay students a financial remuneration, yet the rule is sometimes breached. The amount paid is often low (around EUR 1 or 2 per working hour). It differs among sectors and is regulated in sectoral agreements or internal acts of individual companies (usually 15% of an average monthly salary in Slovenia for the previous month). Company directors and mentors report that their

companies pay students and that they earn more money when they perform well. Companies tend to invite students to work extra-hours during their free time ⁽²⁹⁾. Some company directors admit that they pay remuneration only to those students who work well. Often, companies also openly admit breaching the regulations and not paying their students, yet no record is kept. Schools and chambers are not willing to react because learning workplaces can often be difficult to find.

Employers who enter individual learning agreements may receive financial support from the Ministry of Economy (funding is distributed via the chambers). Not all companies are aware of this support.

The State is responsible for financing VET schools, and financial support for PTW to companies and schools by the government is occasionally available. VET is free of charge except for adult learners. The Organisation and Financing of Education Act (2015) specifies the sources of funding by purpose, duty and responsibility, and lays down financing terms and conditions. The main source is public funds. The MoESS finances one PTW organiser of practical training per 364 students of vocational upper secondary programme and one lecturer-organiser of practical training per 150 students of higher vocational programmes. Chambers carry out PTW tasks under public authorisation granted by the MoESS, mainly for verification of learning places. The chambers receive funding for the verification and are obliged to report the ministry about the number of verifications they conducted.

There are no data on recuperation of company investment in PTW. Some company directors and mentors see advantages in taking students, particularly in their third year when they are often able to perform their tasks quite independently (in the hospitality sector, for example). The chambers express concerns that the organisation of apprenticeship proposed in the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) will not enable recuperation of investment because the vocational qualifications are too broadly conceptualised and the companies will not be able to train apprentices for such broad vocations in three years.

⁽²⁹⁾ There is special arrangement called 'student labour', which allows students after the age of 16 (and up to the age of 26 if they have student status) to work alongside their studies. Students cannot be paid less than EUR 4.53 per hour (often EUR 6 or 7). Certain company costs (insurance, taxes) are related to the arrangement.

There are no systemic financial incentives to encourage companies to take on apprentices, only project-based subsidies. One relevant initiative took place between 2008 and 2014 ⁽³⁰⁾. The government aims to motivate companies and the chambers towards apprenticeship by financial means; in the next five years, the MoESS plans to continue with substantial financial support for the introduction of apprenticeship (80% ESF, 20% State budget). Details of the support are not defined yet but, currently, the project is being prepared which will be targeted to employers who either provide PTW or will take apprentices (the latter will receive more money). The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology will continue to support companies (means for safety equipment and remuneration of travel and food costs). The chambers will be jointly financed for their cooperation in the pilot.

Companies did not all agree on the importance of State subsidies; some saw it as their own responsibility but most seem to expect government support. The results of the online survey show that (only) 68.5% of those companies which presently train students are willing to pay financial remuneration to students. Yet, the larger the company, the more willing it is to remunerate students, so special attention needs to be paid to micro companies.

The online survey revealed that among those companies who currently train students, 72.3% expect the State to subsidise student salary and almost 57% expect the State also to cover part of insurance costs and social security contribution. They also expect the State to cover part of the salaries of mentors, and travel costs for apprentices. The government is willing to cover these costs by relying on ESF funds.

⁽³⁰⁾ Companies were stimulated to increase their involvement in the practical training of students by ESF project Co-financing initiatives for employers to provide work-based learning in educational programmes leading to a vocational qualification. The State jointly funded reimbursement of the cost of a mentor and student remuneration. Funding was intended for companies, but a part (EUR 50) was for the school in which students were enrolled in their final year (for guidance, administrative support, coordination of mentors). The amount for one workplace depended on the amount of available funds in a given year. In the school years 2010 to 2013 slightly fewer than 4 000 companies received incentives: EUR 13.5 million for PTW of 19 631 students (Cedefop ReferNet Slovenia 2014, p. 8).

Table 8. What specific further financial support companies most need in providing PTW for students?

	Frequency	Per cent (of valid N=220)
Covering part of salary of students	159	72.3
Covering part of insurance costs and social security contribution	125	56.8
Covering part of the salary of in-company mentors	93	42.3
Training of in-company mentors	42	19.1
Acquiring training materials	25	11.4
Acquiring safety equipment for students	37	16.8
Covering travel costs	89	40.5
None of the above	2	0.9
Other	10	4.5

Source: Cedefop (results from the online survey).

Some individual radical opinions point to the sensitivity of financial issues. One company representative commented that they do not need any money if the salary is realistic (up to EUR 1 gross per working hour); or that the students should not be paid because they are learning not working. Similarly, they do not oppose the idea that the companies pay occupational injury and occupational disease insurance for the students (because the amount is very low, 0.33%), but they do oppose paying taxes and national insurance (welfare payments and retirement insurance, which is 16%). They say that this would be equal to a typical work relationship, which apprenticeship is not, in their opinion.

Those companies included in the survey which do not currently train their students would be particularly encouraged to take on apprentices/students if part of insurance and social security costs were covered (85.7% hold this opinion), while around 72% would be encouraged by sharing costs of students' salaries.

The chambers share the companies' view that the State is responsible for apprenticeship, because the labour market 'helps' the State to take people 'off the streets'. Chambers and companies have high expectations of the government and do not suggest readiness to cover part of the costs. They also push the government to transfer part of the budget from the

school system to apprenticeship. The MoESS is not prepared to do this and disrupt the status quo, risking fierce opposition from the (strong) education trade unions. This is one of the reasons why the government chose project-based funding.

The study revealed that there are two more financial issues. First, financing of equipment is sometimes insufficient. Companies should finance protective and other equipment, but students and schools report that they need to buy it themselves. There are fewer problems in technologically advanced larger companies. In the hospitality sector, financing equipment for students is not a problem as it is not very expensive; the situation differs in other sectors where equipment is more expensive (such as metal, carpentry and masonry sectors). Schools receive some money from the budget to cover these material costs, but they complain that these amounts are often too small.

Second, the financing of ITCs is not transparent enough, which is caused by the unclear (open) status of these institutions. ITCs are usually established as organisational units within the school centres. The infrastructure has been primarily financed by ESF funds (with a 15% share by the ministry responsible for education, and 15% from the school centre). Now the ministry covers the expenses of a director, while the costs of other staff members are covered from the commercial activities of the centres (they sell their products in the market) and by participating in different European and national projects. Because they seem to receive a rather small proportion of public funding, they need to be inventive and entrepreneurial. Their 'inventiveness' is partly based on the student labour: students do not only learn in ITCs (as part of PTW), but also work there via the 'student labour scheme'. Because the cost of labour in the scheme is much lower compared to the costs for regular employees ⁽³¹⁾, they have higher profits and – as the chambers and some company directors say – have sometimes become their unfair competition. 'Student labour' is seen by employers as profitable, while apprenticeship is not: it might be worth exploring how the experience business has with the student labour could productively inform the apprenticeship.

The chambers and trade unions do not cover any part of the costs related to PTW.

⁽³¹⁾ That is why many companies employ students (particularly higher education students), causing irregularities on the labour market and contributing to graduate unemployment.

4.8. Quality assurance

Practical training in companies is only partially covered by quality assurance, which means that VET education institutions are by law (VET Act, Articles 15-17) obliged to assure quality based on EQAVET principles; this also implies the quality assurance of the PTW. As national quality descriptors are not directly related to PTW, it is up to schools' director/principal and quality commission to decide whether and how to include PTW in quality assurance. This is not often the case, according to a recent study by Klančnik (2016).

Education institutions need to assure quality on their part, yet the bulk of the responsibility lies on the company's side. Therefore, the chambers are the main responsible actor for the quality assurance and control of PTW (VET Act, Article 19). The current system is conceptualised so that the main instrument of quality control is verification of learning workplaces. Practitioners from education and companies indicated that quality assurance is one of the greatest challenges. The TCR identified some deficiencies in quality assurance procedures in place of the verified learning workplaces. The chambers point out that quality control is in place, but that it is of 'supportive and advisory character', meaning that it is not based on any accountability mechanisms or on inspections and possible penalties. The chambers' interest is giving companies the opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions for PTW, and not to put 'pressure' on them. The chambers document verification procedures, but they did not share strategic documents or quality assurance reports. Chambers reported that they occasionally monitor if training plans are prepared, if students keep their diaries, if employers and students are satisfied with each other's performance, yet no indication was found that verified companies were regularly monitored by chambers over time in a structured way, in their compliance with the criteria. Many schools indicated that for collective learning agreements quality is most often monitored by the organisers of practice; only in case of individual contracts is the main control mechanism intermediate examination.

Verification of learning workplaces is a quality assurance mechanism foreseen in the legal framework. However, the TCR found that:

- (a) companies have not always verified their learning workplaces (67.9% of the respondents of the online survey reported having verified learning places);
- (b) some organisers of practice and some companies are not aware of the verification procedures;

- (c) the chambers sometimes bend the rules to accommodate the needs and capacity of companies. Chambers indicated that it is the education inspectorate's task to control that schools send students to companies with verified learning workplaces, and this is all that needs to be taken care of.

As discussed in Section 4.3., the quality of the training plans, which can serve as quality assurance tools setting agreed learning outcomes, is also a challenge. Experts and the CPI indicated that selection and formulation of learning outcomes is important: even in situations in which apprentices do not have the opportunity to meet a wide range of tasks, transferable skills can be developed. Lists of narrowly defined activities are not good. Mentors need to be guided to teach apprentices how to think 'theoretically' about practical problems. Unfortunately, Slovenia lacks expertise on vocational didactics. The CPI indicates that broadening the knowledge base in this area is mainly their responsibility, and they see it as one of the key roles of their organisation.

4.9. Student working and learning conditions

The rights and obligations of students attending PTW are regulated by the VET Act (Article 38). The rights of students were discussed in Sections 4.5. and 4.7.; it was found out that their rights tend to be breached, especially concerning financial remuneration. This might be the reason why the MoESS decided to define financial obligations of companies in the Law on Apprenticeship (2017). Student obligations during PTW are defined in the VET Act (Article 38) ⁽³²⁾, and have not raised any issues during the stakeholder interviews.

The body responsible for informing students about their rights and the obligations of all parties is usually the school. This is particularly so in the case of collective agreements. When a problem arises, students and companies try to solve it themselves; if this is not possible they involve the school. Occasionally the chambers or the CPI are invited to intervene. Trade unions, whose role in apprenticeship should focus exactly on this aspect, are not seen by stakeholders nor by themselves as crucial partners in this respect. Contracts between students/schools and companies exist as

⁽³²⁾ Student must: accomplish planned learning activities, regularly attend school; follow school and employer regulations; safeguard professional secrets and obey safety rules.

required by law, yet they raise some concerns. Individual contracts provided for in the VET law that are aimed at increasing the amount of training in companies are not widely used, although in the last two years, the MoESS has acted to increase their number. For example, the MoESS allows schools to publish vacancies for some programmes only under condition that these students sign individual contracts. Chambers and schools do not seem to favour either individual contracts or employment contracts.

In current arrangements students are protected in case of company failure. In cases of company failure, the agreement (collective or individual) requires schools or the chambers to provide another learning workplace.

The findings indicate that career guidance and counselling is a concern, much discussed both in relation to apprenticeship and also VET in general. Even though every elementary and secondary school has a school practitioner or other full-time employee(s) responsible for student guidance, none of these have had systematic career guidance training. Education legislation prescribes the cooperation between school counsellors and the Employment Service of Slovenia in career guidance matters. Recently this cooperation has been even more limited due to financial cuts. School counsellors work according to the guidelines for school counselling; these help in informing students and parents on VET education programmes and administrative procedures, but not in providing broader career education or developing career management skills.

Similar situations can be observed in career guidance and counselling for adults; the network is generally well developed (there are 14 guidance centres for adults nationwide), yet counsellors tend to be weaker in the ability to develop adult career management skills. There is a national trans-sectoral network of all institutions which provide guidance services, with guidelines for lifelong learning career guidance. Currently, there is debate about the paradigms underpinning guidance activities, including different use of terminology such as guidance or counselling.

There is, however, a comprehensive online platform (*Moja izbira/My choice*)⁽³³⁾, managed by the CPI, that provides much useful information for students, parents, adults and counsellors on occupations, programmes and schools. It also includes different guidelines, professional materials, news, and even games about occupations. With little upgrading it could become a one-stop shop, also for apprenticeship.

⁽³³⁾ <http://www.mojaizbira.si/>

Elementary and secondary education students, as well as adults, have different information channels available; there are many information points and guidance and counselling services. This is the strength of the system. Yet, vocational or career guidance is not sufficiently developed. Reasons for this may be the low status of vocational programmes and tendency to enrol high-achieving students into gymnasium programmes, as well as budgetary interests in schools. It seems that the challenge is not only the lack of knowledge, but also the existing mentality of the (school) counsellors.

4.10. Responsiveness to labour market

Institutional procedures that allow PTW/VET to respond to or anticipate the needs of the labour market are limited in Slovenia; there is oversupply of students in some VET programmes, often generated by VET schools based on their capacity and infrastructure. The main instrument developed to allow VET to respond to the needs of the labour market is renewal of the occupational standards. This normally takes place every five years, followed by revision of curricula. The second instrument is the 'open curriculum' (Section 4.3.1.).

Short-term labour market needs can be reported by enterprises via announcement of learning workplaces, a two-fold method of reporting needs for human resources and communicating willingness of employers to train students. Analysis of published training workplaces can serve partly as proxy for the needs of the labour market for the occupations covered in the three-year programmes. However, as the TCR found out, most placements are based on personal contacts or through established cooperation with schools, so this measure might not necessarily reflect the real picture.

The Public Employment Service also monitors skills needs via job vacancy statistics and information they receive from employers at fairs, meetings and conferences. They do not have a view of all labour market needs. They indicated that such a system was available until 2013 when employers had to announce all vacancies at the Employment Service. Following amendment of the Law on Labour Market Management (2010) in 2013, employers publicly announce vacancies only as they wish.

Chambers, institutions such as the CPI or the Institute for Adult Education conduct occasional surveys monitoring medium-term labour market needs or forecasting skills needs, plus occasional research studies.

There is a growing tendency among education institutions to collect data on graduate employability. Professional colleges providing higher education programmes tend to keep track of their graduates' careers more than secondary schools (alumni clubs).

Ex-ante evaluation of scope and needs was not carried out before preparation of the Law on Apprenticeship (2017), which is an important obstacle to its development and implementation. Outputs and outcomes of VET in general, however, have been monitored and evaluated by the CPI. The study they conducted in 2013, which analysed the employability of graduates of upper secondary vocational and technical schools, showed statistically significant differences between employment status and type of education and training programme followed. Most of those who attended lower secondary (two-year VET programmes) or secondary vocational education (three-year VET programme) were either still in education or unemployed/looking for employment (Žagar and Hergan 2013). The results indicate that apprenticeship programmes at post-secondary level might bring better results than at upper secondary level, because young people tend to remain in education and do not enter the labour market after graduating from three-year vocational secondary school. Because of the values and the wages, the 'lift effect' (young people increasingly aspire to reach higher education) is powerful in Slovenia.

4.11. The Law on Apprenticeship (May 2017)

The preparation of the law took place simultaneously with the TCR; the discussions were continuing at the time of writing this report, which is why the TCR has only partially addressed its proposed provisions, reviewing current PTW practice. The provisions of the draft law were addressed in the third round of the TCR and, whenever possible, the TCR fed into discussions and preparation of the draft law.

The law aims to consolidate under one umbrella the regulations from vocational education and training, labour market and adult education concerning the company-based part of training; it will also cover some aspects that have not been regulated before. The law does not cover the school-based part of apprenticeship as this is regulated by the VET Act (2006).

The new law has been subject to public consultation (in summer 2016) and numerous discussions and debates, some heated and featuring opposing points of view. Discussions included the following points:

- (a) the social partners were not willing to accept apprentices as employees as initially foreseen in the draft law while the MoESS and the MoLFSAE0 supported this. The chambers see apprentices as learners (Section 4.1.). In the end, the status of apprentice as a student has been kept, though the ministries, some trade unions, the CPI, the Institute for Adult Education, and some experts preferred the status of employee instead of student. However, the status will largely determine distribution of responsibilities as well as monitoring;
- (b) consensus had to be reached regarding the target groups (youths or adults). Opinions strongly divided between ministries that saw apprenticeship as a means to tackle youth and adult unemployment, and social partners and trade unions that saw it as only applicable to young learners in three-year vocational programmes;
- (c) the law conceptualises apprenticeship as a learning route towards a qualification, the only difference from the school-based route being the amount of time spent in company. That means that the apprentice will have to achieve all the learning outcomes prescribed by the education programme. Achieving the same education standards in both routes, apprenticeship and school-based, might be a challenge for companies as upper secondary vocational programmes tend to be broad (Section 4.3.). Further elaboration and work will be needed to ensure this;
- (d) the debate on the draft law brought forward the differences in opinions on the requirements to qualification level and experience of mentors. The MoESS and the education, science and culture trade union proposed that mentors in companies need four-year technical education⁽³⁴⁾ (or one education level higher than apprentices), while the chambers thought it sufficient that mentors to students from three-year programmes have three-year vocational education. There is general agreement among experts that the preferred situation would be for mentors to be master craftsmen as was the case in the past;
- (e) the fact that trade unions were not directly involved in drafting the text of the law resulted in trade unions not being mentioned in the first versions of the draft. The role of the trade unions has also been questioned by the chambers, if apprentices remain students only (Sections 4.2. and 4.9.);

⁽³⁴⁾ Note that the term 'education' or 'education level' is used, not 'qualification' or 'qualification level'. It is the education level that discussions evolved about because education is a particular value in the Slovenian society.

- (f) heated debate revolved around financial matters, where most stakeholders expected that the government should provide most resources as it is the State that is responsible for providing education to citizens (Section 4.7.).

In the end, the Law on Apprenticeship (2017) provides as follows:

- (a) target groups and applicable VET programmes: apprenticeship will be applied to upper secondary three-year VET programmes and continuing vocational education and training. The law introduces the term 'apprentice'. An apprentice is a person who is enrolled in an upper secondary vocational education programme which is provided in an apprenticeship form of education. An apprentice also applies to a person who is either an adult learner, unemployed or employed, and studying to achieve upper secondary vocational education qualification, prequalification, or further education qualification. An apprentice should be older than 15 and be enrolled in one of the above programmes. Those who find a placement are priority for enrolment to schools;
- (b) chambers acquired additional responsibilities. Specifically, their tasks are:
 - (i) cooperate in the preparation of training plans;
 - (ii) update three registers: the register of verified learning workplaces, the register of apprentices, and the register of mentors;
 - (iii) provide guidance services for employers, function as mediators in case of conflicts between apprentices and employers;
 - (iv) develop programmes for training mentors and do the training;
 - (v) be actively engaged in finding placements for apprentices (Law on Apprenticeship, 2017, Article 12).
- (c) trade unions have also been assigned a role in the final version of the Law:
 - (i) a representative of trade unions will be one of the members of the committee for monitoring the implementation of apprenticeships (Article 14);
 - (ii) trade union representatives will be included in ad hoc commissions, established if rights of apprentices are violated (Article 47).
- (d) coordination body: a committee for monitoring the implementation of apprenticeships is set up, with representatives of chambers, the MoESS and the MoLFSAE0, trade unions, employers, and schools involved in apprenticeship. The committee will prepare an annual report on the implementation of apprenticeship in the previous year and forward it to the ministry responsible for education; it will discuss issues and develop recommendations for effective implementation of the apprenticeship;

- (e) contract and conditions for the employers: a contract is signed between an apprentice (or parent in case of minors) and a company, then the apprentice enrolls in school. The contract is registered by the relevant chamber;
- (f) requirements for companies and mentors: the main conditions that allow employers to train apprentices are to have verified learning workplaces and to provide a qualified mentor. As a minimum, a mentor should have upper secondary technical education, three years of work experience, or master craftsman, foreman and managerial qualification, and have undertaken a pedagogical-andragogical course. Exceptionally, for upper secondary vocational education, mentors are allowed with five-year work experience and pedagogical-andragogical competences (this exception was added after public consultation);
- (g) cooperation of learning venues: companies and schools cooperate in the design of the training plans for apprentices, and agree on the manner of cooperation. Schools are responsible for the quality of learning in schools and companies for the learning at the working place;
The law envisages that practical training could be implemented also in ITCs. It should be further explored as the chambers and companies are somewhat cautious towards the role of ITCs (see also Section 4.2.);
- (h) obligations and rights of an apprentice: these are defined (Article 18), though they do not differ much from the current arrangements, as the status of an apprentice remains a student. The employer has to send the apprentice to school and enable the apprentice to fulfil obligations under the education programme at the school.
The law explicitly indicates the minimum amount of apprentice remuneration, which was previously regulated by sectoral agreements, for the young and for adults. Compared to current arrangements, during PTW apprentices enjoy some employee rights for the time spent in companies: they should be insured in the same way as regular employees in health insurance, insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases;
- (i) financial matters are defined in detail, placing a number of financial obligations on companies (such as reimbursement of apprentice expenses related to apprenticeship, such as for transportation to and from the training venue, food, mission expenses) as an add-in when defined in the collective agreement binding to the employer. The required costs can become a serious financial burden to companies (especially, micro and small) that can prevent them from taking apprentices;

- (j) control: compared to the current arrangement for PTW, where the education inspectorate is responsible, control of apprenticeships will be shared between the labour inspectorate and the education inspectorate (Article 46).

4.12. Enablers and challenges

The review identified some strong enablers in the current system that can support further improvement of WBL and implementation of the Law on Apprenticeship. There are also challenges that will need to be addressed to put apprenticeship on track. Some factors can act as enablers and challenges at the same time.

4.12.1. Enablers

- (a) The existing legislation framework for PTW sets certain rules (including rules and obligations for companies providing PTW) which are a good starting point for setting up the arrangements for the new pathway and bringing VET closer to the needs of the labour market.
- (b) Two types of formal VET apprenticeship-type programme are established where the practical training component has been enhanced in recent years: three-year upper secondary vocational education programmes and two-year higher vocational education programme. The enhanced PTW arrangements have brought some schools and companies closer together to set good practice in cooperation and link with the labour market; this can be used as inspiration for other schools and inform guidance activities. While there is room for improvement, it is good ground to build on.
- (c) The social partners are involved in VET at strategic level. The MoESS cooperates with the MoLFSASO and with the social partners in several bodies, such as the sector committees for occupational standards and the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education. The programmes are based on occupational standards, also developed and upgraded in social partnership. Social partnerships could play a bigger role in programming and implementing PTW and apprenticeship, especially at regional and local level, involving branches of chambers and trade unions.
- (d) The competence-based approach is applied in occupational standards, and learning outcomes are defined in all types of upper secondary and

higher education vocational programmes. This ensures coherence of theoretical vocational knowledge, practical skills and key competences and can aid distribution of content, allowing schools and companies (and ITCs) to agree on the learning outcomes to be achieved at different learning venues in PTW and apprenticeship.

- (e) All formal upper secondary VET programmes (where apprenticeship will also be applied) are based on one or more occupational standards plus the general education part, which guarantees permeability to higher levels of education.
- (f) The provisions for the ‘open curriculum’ allow adaptability of learning outcomes to needs of the local labour market and interests of local companies.
- (g) Schools have the means to prepare students for PTW, improve cooperation among learning venues and evaluate student achievement. PTW organisers, their State-funded position, and their experience gained so far are a strong enabler for coordination of apprenticeship.
- (h) ITCs can potentially play a significant role in ensuring that apprentices acquire all necessary competences, complementing learning in schools and companies. Almost all (particularly larger) school centres have organised ITCs enabling their students (and also local companies and adult learners) to improve their technical skills and competences.
- (i) Quality assurance has become an integral part of vocational education and is based on the EQAVET principles. Its implementation could serve as the starting point for quality of learning in companies in the future apprenticeship system.

4.12.2. Challenges

- (a) The main challenge for Slovenia introducing quality apprenticeship is the current lack of a clear and commonly agreed vision: why apprenticeship is reintroduced, what it will look like compared to the current PTW provision, and how it will work. The Law on Apprenticeship is not supported by a clear ‘theory of change’⁽³⁵⁾ and underpinning analysis (clear rationale and *ex-ante* evaluation). This challenge leads to several other related challenges discussed below.
- (b) The status of an apprentice has been one of the most controversial unresolved issues and many stakeholders agreed apprenticeship cannot

⁽³⁵⁾ The theory of change follows the logic that to understand fully the apprenticeship change process, it is necessary for each element in the broader strategy to identify the ‘why, what, who, when, and how’.

be implemented without such an agreement. Debate and discussion on the draft Law on Apprenticeship ended up defining the apprentice as a student only, with limited employment benefits; this was the position supported by the chambers. This outcome creates a serious challenge to implementation of apprenticeship beyond the announced pilot as it makes no clear distinction from the current provisions for PTW, apart from the amount of time to be spent with the employer.

- (c) Disagreements about the target groups and programmes where apprenticeships should be introduced are also challenging. It is not clear why the law limits apprenticeship only to three-year upper secondary vocational education programmes and continuing VET. Will, or can, it be expanded to the two-year higher VET programmes or the four-year technical programmes? Opinions are divided between ministries that have a more open view on apprenticeship as a pathway, on the one hand, and the social partners, on the other; this calls for more open and in-depth dialogue among all stakeholders.
- (d) Non-compliance with regulations and procedures (such as verification criteria and process for companies) is observed in the current PTW system. This is a direct consequence of the unclear division of responsibilities among stakeholders and lack of monitoring.
- (e) Companies do not demonstrate strong motivation and interest in taking students for PTW, which may be even more the case for apprenticeship and its greater responsibility; their role is modest and relatively passive. This lack of employer motivation might be because they perceive the training content as not meeting their needs and processes, or because of the lack of good communication between companies and schools.
- (f) There is some imbalance between expectations/requirements of mentors in companies and lack of transparency and clarity in provision of pedagogical-andragogical training. It is not clear who coordinates this training provision.
- (g) A further crucial challenge is funding, particularly how to find a sustainable financing model for apprenticeship in Slovenia and stimulate those companies who have genuine interest in training of, and demand for, future employees. Currently, most initiatives, including implementation of the forthcoming law, have relied on EU joint funding.





5. Areas and suggestions for action

Areas and suggestions for action

This section is forward-looking; it takes into account the findings of the analysis of the current PTW situation (as described in Chapter 4) and projects them forward to guide the implementation of the new Law on Apprenticeship.

Under the current scenario, and how some aspects have been modified and agreed during consultations on the draft Law on Apprenticeship, the risk that implementation of the law will be difficult is high. This risk is accentuated by the finding that many schools and employers wish to leave the arrangements for training with the employer as they are now in PTW.

The challenges identified (Section 4.12.2.) signal that chambers, companies, and schools might not embrace the concept of apprenticeship on a large scale. The following can be expected:

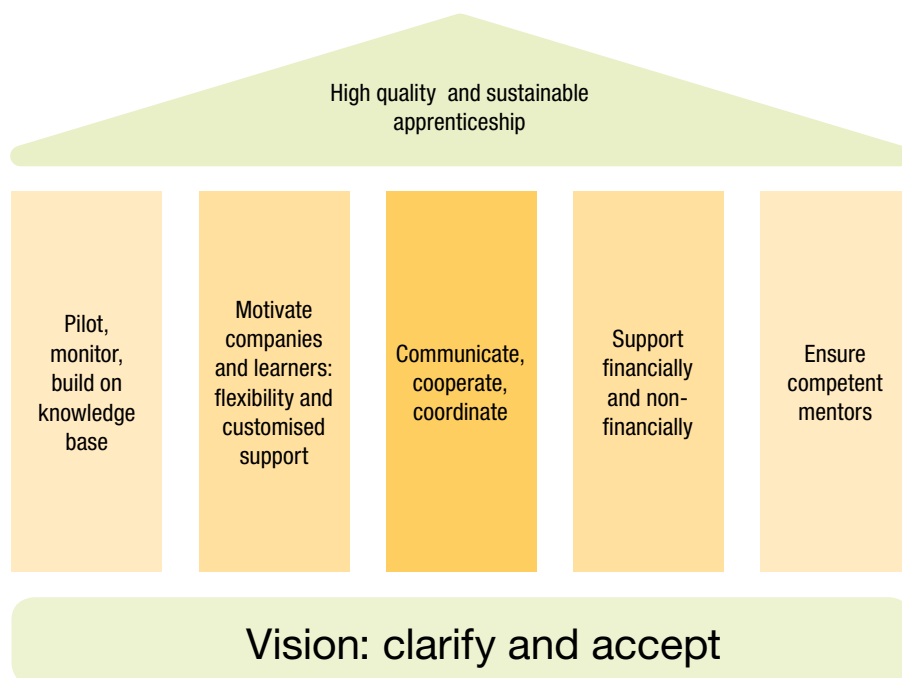
- (a) if the selection of programmes and sectors (first for piloting and later for mainstreaming) is not based on companies' willingness and labour needs, implementation of apprenticeship will not be sustainable;
- (b) if apprenticeship is limited only to three-year upper secondary vocational education programmes, when companies may need other types of qualification, the attractiveness of apprenticeship for companies and, consequently, apprenticeship intake, will be low or will not take place;
- (c) implementation of apprenticeship can come into conflict with active labour market policy measures (ALMPMs) for adults, in particular the unemployed;
- (d) lack of clear distinction between apprenticeship and the current PTW in school-based VET, especially for individual contracts, may negatively affect cooperation of schools with employers and chambers;
- (e) if the support to companies is limited to financial measures, apprenticeships will not sustain in the medium to long term. It will be taken up on a very small scale and will fade out once the financial means, both from the EU and national budget, decrease or stop.

However, the enablers of the current provisions for PTW, if properly used, can support putting apprenticeship on track in Slovenia. The areas for action outlined below are targeted at apprenticeship but can help improve PTW arrangements.

Laying the foundation of a clear vision for apprenticeship accepted by all stakeholders, Slovenia will require the following building blocks to establish a quality apprenticeship system:

- (a) careful piloting and monitoring, building on the existing knowledge base;
- (b) motivating companies and learners through flexibility and personalised support;
- (c) improving communication, cooperation, coordination and accepting responsibilities;
- (d) developing a sustainable funding model and non-financial support;
- (e) ensuring availability of competent mentors in companies.

Figure 2. **Building quality apprenticeship**



Source: Cedefop.

5.1. Clarifying and accepting apprenticeship vision – Developing implementation strategy

The first major step for VET stakeholders in Slovenia is to clarify and agree on their vision for apprenticeship and its place in the education and training system. Both the MoESS (with overall responsibility for VET) and the social partners should take active part in this discussion and clarify their expectations.

Based on analysis of Slovenian VET, its enablers and challenges, and the debate on the new law, apprenticeship can be implemented as follows:

- (a) apprenticeship starts with bottom-up piloting and further mainstreaming based on thorough evaluation of pilots and continuous monitoring of further action. Costs and benefits are analysed at sectoral level and used to support further apprenticeship development and expansion;
- (b) apprenticeship becomes one of the pathways in the education system, which leads to the same qualifications as those acquired through school-based or any other learning route;
- (c) apprenticeship is targeted at all individuals who see the workplace as the most appropriate starting point for the development of their professional career, irrespective of the education programme they are enrolled in. Learners are supported by more individualised career guidance;
- (d) apprenticeship is implemented in the economic sectors and educational programmes where companies have demand for new workers and willingness and capacity (motivation, mentors, infrastructure and trust) to provide quality learning to apprentices and take up responsibility;
- (e) apprenticeship builds on the experience of good practice in cooperation, which will help improve cooperation between schools as well as between schools and local industry (see Box 3 below for some examples);
- (f) mentors in companies are trained through a specific national training module developed by the CPI in cooperation with social partners; opportunities for their continuing professional development are established;
- (g) the quality of apprenticeship is assured by integrating existing VET system quality assurance principles and mechanisms to apprenticeship. The focus will be on assuring the quality of learning workplaces and mentors, quality training plans, and learning outcomes assessment;
- (h) apprenticeship is based on a sustainable cost-sharing model of financing;
- (i) apprenticeship is all about cooperation and trust; there is no cooperation without trust and no trust without cooperation; there is no trust without all partners accepting their share of responsibility.

Box 3. Examples of good cooperation between schools and companies

The main way of attracting and motivating companies is through personal contacts. Some schools invest a lot of energy and time in finding appropriate companies and maintaining good relationships. Sometimes they also depend on student contacts in local communities. Each school has a list of companies which they regularly update.

One school centre, interviewed in the course of the TCR, organises an annual event to which companies are invited to present their business and activities. In the final examination period, they organise exhibitions with banquets, invite parents and company representatives. They sometimes invite companies to take part in education projects with students. As a result, companies themselves give recommendations to other companies.

Source: Cedefop.

5.2. Careful piloting and monitoring, building on the existing knowledge base

5.2.1. Setting up a pilot

Slovenia began re-establishing apprenticeship without a thorough analysis (*ex-ante* assessment), but with past and the present experience from where the PTW component in vocational education programmes has been increased. The unfavourable past experience makes some stakeholders less trustful, yet simultaneously considering apprenticeship as a productive learning path for contemporary society. While the commonly shared vision is still to be achieved, the idea of a pilot as a means for launching apprenticeship seems most rational. The MoESS supported by the CPI has prepared a pilot to start from 2017/18 school year. This should thoroughly test the proposed conditions of the new law and should be closely monitored and adjusted as it progresses (see Box 4 inspired by the Lithuanian experience with setting up a national pilot).

Box 4. **Setting up a national pilot on apprenticeship**

Pilots enable to check whether a system works (well) and under what conditions, with small costs involved. If there are any imperfections in the system, pilots allow easy adjustments. Pilots can be good or bad, depending whether a pilot follows a number of principles for successful implementation. Lithuania – one of the first TCR countries – is currently piloting a new apprenticeship system, based on the action plan developed at the end of 2016. The action plan has indicated the following principles leading to a successful pilot.

- **Sustainability:** any pilot should be part of a much larger picture, much larger strategy on how the system will sustain itself. In Lithuania, one of the crucial questions is what will happen when the EU financial support diminishes after 2020. The pilot should already include elements to address these concerns.
- **More is less:** development of a well-functioning system takes time. Therefore, ideally, there should be more than one pilot running. One pilot is not likely to solve all issues but two or more will mean fewer mistakes in the system and fewer resources used in correcting them.
- **Timing:** piloting should consider all major political and economic milestones in the country. For example, pilots carried out just before parliamentary elections may not be a wise decision as a new ruling party/coalition is likely to bring in changes, which may significantly affect the system. If a pilot is to be supported with EU funds, preparation should start much earlier to prevent being late in using the available funding.
- **Lost in translation:** before any pilot, discussions among representatives of all key players in the system should take place. Ideally, discussions should be supported by sound data on apprenticeships, available nationally and internationally. Data on the returns and benefits are very important to businesses, as they trust facts and not opinions. Such discussions also help to clarify essential terms and definitions as well as any doubts regarding the system: they should strengthen common understanding. This prevents stakeholders from being lost in translation.
- **Governance:** ideally, the system, as well as pilot, should integrate but not further fragment the target groups or types of VET (initial and continuing). Responsible organisations should not consider the pilot as an opportunity to maximise their area of influence, but to mainstream the apprenticeship pathway and make it as clear as possible for all participants.



- **Support:** support is essential to piloting, in terms of internal resources of the coordinating institution. Specific individual(s) should be given the responsibility and sufficient time for strategically driving the piloting process. There should also be day-to-day support for pilot projects, since most questions will arise at the start of pilot projects and independent practitioners are needed, willing and able to support the implementation of every step.
- **Framework conditions:** when piloting: it is important not only to consider pilot implementation but also to pay attention to the framework conditions. For example, there may be legal acts that constrain VET school flexibility (such as requirements to account costs using tariff hours or not to form classes if smaller than certain sizes). Piloting gives the opportunity to see where amendments to framework conditions are needed and make them. This is the key for smooth functioning of the system.
- **Follow-up:** piloting should be accompanied by comprehensive monitoring and evaluation to identify the lessons learned and examine the key elements for a smooth system. Ideally, evaluation should also include cost-benefit analysis, providing evidence to key players, especially employers. Where the results are positive, this would be a good opportunity to encourage companies to make use of the new system. If results are poor, they provide valuable lessons on how to amend the apprenticeship system.

The above summarises just a few elements considered during the TCR of apprenticeships in Lithuania and its follow-up process. However, as one employer put it, ‘it is important not to drown ourselves into too much analysis and just do it’. Once a pilot had been set, better solutions arise as it evolves.

Source: Elaboration based on the Lithuanian thematic country review of apprenticeships (Cedefop, 2015) and its follow-up activities.

5.2.2. Continuous monitoring and building the knowledge base

The pilot implementation is likely to reveal problems and gaps in the legal provisions, such as the status of the apprentice, distribution of content or contractual obligations. The CPI, which has experience and capacity and is well-trusted by most stakeholders, is mandated to conduct continuous monitoring of the pilot and discuss the progress made with the social partners at all stages of implementation. The CPI is a knowledge base on VET and PTW, having conducted several PTW evaluations and studies, which enables linking new findings to previous experience.

One of the issues that monitoring can focus on is analysis of apprenticeship costs and benefits; this helps to capture outcomes for the participating companies and to inform, motivate and convince more companies to take apprentices. The recent studies (BusinessEurope, 2016a; Wolter and Mühlemann, 2015) on cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships can serve as examples of practice to build on as their methodologies have been applied in Germany, Spain, Switzerland and currently in Italy (see also Box 5).

Other studies can analyse the specificities of the apprentice status, its relationship with other statuses, such as the student status, and its benefits for student and parents versus the apprentice status; apprenticeship versus student labour, investment of companies in both cases.

5.3. Motivating companies and learners through flexibility and customised support

5.3.1. Increasing motivation of companies and learners

Apprenticeship will not take off in Slovenia without company and learner interest: there has to be strong motivation on the companies' side to take apprentices and on the learners' side to take part in apprenticeship. The motivation of companies can increase if apprenticeship shows favourable outcomes for the company (in the short term during the apprenticeship, as well as in the long term, at the end of the training programme, when they can employ a skilled employee that they need) (see Box 5 for some examples). The motivation of apprentices, in contrast, can increase: first, through access to employment (staying in the company where they learn, should the company wish and be able to hire them) and, second, by being eligible for further learning, should they wish to continue.

Box 5. Engaging companies in apprenticeship

There is no silver bullet solution for engaging more companies in apprenticeship as companies vary greatly in terms of their characteristics and needs. However, there are a number of recipes which may be helpful to attract companies to apprenticeship.

- Cost-benefit analysis (CBA): first, employers need to learn about apprenticeship in their own language; cost-benefit analysis, if well done, can support this.



Second, CBA helps to find out under what circumstances it pays off for business and other actors to participate in apprenticeships. Third, CBA may also justify the need for more cost-sharing; it may reveal to employers that even if they contribute, they could derive much larger benefit after the end of the apprenticeship contract. CBA comprises the following elements:

- original or borrowed methodology;
 - simulations (apprenticeship types or other situations to compare);
 - selection of occupations to compare;
 - varying scenarios (e.g. different salary dynamics for the same apprentice);
 - important differences within the country (regional or group-specific).
- **Quick fix:** this is crucial in business. It often runs contrary to the traditional VET system where it takes years to prepare an employee for the future. However, recent VET innovations such as modularisation of training programmes enable VET schools to better adapt to company needs and offer solutions over a shorter time period.
 - **Motivation:** a key need of companies is to receive students who are motivated and come to 'the right place and at a right time'. Motivation is often a result of well-established career guidance system (Section 5.3.3.2. and Box 5).
 - **Managing apprentices:** companies, especially SMEs, need greater flexibility in implementing apprenticeships. For example, they do not have sufficient resources to coordinate all apprenticeship activities and/ or cannot ensure all learning outcomes for apprentices. The UK has developed a solution for such a situation, by establishing an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) model. ATA's arrange apprentices for employers that are unable to employ apprentices (and commit themselves) for the whole apprenticeship period, experience short term restrictions on employee numbers, or are uncertain about the value of an apprenticeship. ATAs act as the apprentices' employer and place them with a host employer. If circumstances change and the host employer is unable to retain the apprentice, the ATA will find alternative employment and give them the reassurance that they can continue their apprenticeship. ATA's coordinate the apprentice's training and pay for the associated training costs. The host employer pays a fee to the agency, based on the wage of the apprentice and their training costs.
 - **Guidance on daily concerns** of companies on how to implement apprenticeship is key to keeping companies interested in continuing with the apprenticeship. Companies that are employing apprentices for the first time may often have many questions and it is important they know who to address their concerns



to. Ideally, consultations should be provided in a ‘one-stop shop’ and by representatives such as chambers or employers’ associations.

- **Flexibility of VET schools:** training providers should have enough freedom to meet the daily needs of employers. The latter may take various forms. For example, a mentor from a company may need guidance from a VET teacher on how to take care of apprentice’s training. VET teachers should have sufficient experience, competence and resources to interact with in-company trainers in addressing their daily concerns.

Source: Elaboration based on Wolter and Mühlemann (2015); Skills Funding Agency (2015); BusinessEurope (2016a).

Learners and employers’ voices are not well heard at the moment. To be motivated, they both should have more say on what they want to train and what (and how) they want to learn. Some existing mechanisms can support this. Training plans and the ‘open curriculum’ should be further developed and applied more to support a more flexible and personalised approach and to ensure the acquisition of all learning outcomes to meet the needs of learners and companies. Besides the formal learning outcomes defined by the programmes, individual training plans can include additional competences for a specific apprentice that can be acquired through the specialisation of a company, from learners’ interest as well as in an ITC. Apprenticeships should also dedicate a large share of learning to the acquisition of transversal skills that are one of the most significant factors for good career development and that are a strong component of current vocational training programmes implemented in schools.

There are various measures to support companies to take apprentices (Box 5 presents some examples). As the TCR shows, access to better information (on possibilities to take on students, on costs and benefits of PTW and apprenticeship), better guidance, better alignment of education programmes to their needs and possibilities to share practice seem most important to companies in Slovenia (Table 9).

Table 9. **What non-financial support would your company need the most to be further engaged in providing students with PTW?**

	Frequency	Per cent (of valid N=217)
Better guidance by schools	85	39.2
Better information on possibilities to take students	77	35.5
Better alignment between education programmes and company needs	68	31.3
Platform to share experiences and award best practices of PTW	54	24.9
Better guidance by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET	50	23.0
Better guidance by chambers	49	22.6
Better information on companies' responsibilities for taking students	48	22.1
Support in recruiting students for PTW, coordinating day-to-day activities	37	17.1
Better training opportunities for in-company mentors	25	11.5
Other	8	3.7
None of the above	7	3.2

Source. Cedefop (results from the online survey).

5.3.2. Improving career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling are seen by most stakeholders (CPI, the National Institute for Adult Education, employers, students) as important and crucial to the success of apprenticeship and vocational education in general. The TCR revealed the need for more attention and strengthening of career guidance which should be more individualised.

There is a need for an earlier start to guidance and counselling; schools need a strategy to support each student in planning his or her career as early as the final (two) years of elementary school. Parents should be invited to participate as partners in their children's career decisions.

Taking into account sectoral specificities, needs and capacity, employers should be more intensively involved in activities related to guidance in elementary schools, including development of a website or direct student

counselling. In some sectors, companies may invite students to workplaces (such as the production line) while in others, they may come to school (for example in a touring bus that visits schools introducing students to industry). Some countries have projects that invite professionals to schools to explain in simple language what they do and what their professions are about. This practice is occasionally also found in Slovenia, but could be further developed and implemented in a systematic way.

The existing guidelines for school-based guidance and counselling (currently, within the mandate of the National Institute for Education) should be revised in cooperation with the CPI experts; school guidance practitioners should be trained and better informed about VET programmes. As apprenticeship will also be used for adult learners, counsellors working in guidance centres for adults should also be informed on these opportunities.

Examples of other countries can be an inspiration (Box 6).

Box 6. Improving guidance and counselling: the experience from several EU countries

Bringing significant individual benefits, early career guidance and counselling is costly from the government point of view. Guidance is most often provided much later, e.g. close to completion of lower secondary education or even afterwards. An important part of guidance is face-to-face consultation by guidance practitioners at school. However, internet-based solutions are also becoming increasingly popular.

In Ireland, guidance teachers refer pupils to an internet platform (www.apprentices.ie) where they can find more information on construction sector apprenticeships, create their profile and search for the right employer. The platform also offers services to companies that can register and search for potential apprentices. As a whole, it serves as a mediation service between apprentices and companies.

More information available at: www.apprentices.ie

Guidance can also be informal, such as by peers of potential apprentices. Platforms that integrate feedback from apprentices are good practice. In the UK, a website, 'Rate my apprenticeship' (<https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk/>) helps students not only to decide on their pathway (apprenticeship or other), but also choose best employers. The website provides rating of best



employers, based on thousands of reviews from young people. It is often true that apprentices are the best commentators on their learning place.

More information available at: www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk

Informal guidance is also provided by parents and school teachers. As parents often take the financial burden of their child's education, they have enormous influence over choices. Informing parents and changing their perception of apprenticeship could be the key in making apprenticeships more attractive. What kind of information teachers provide to their pupils in secondary schools is also important: a preference towards higher education will increase negative perceptions of VET/apprenticeship among students. The 'Rate my apprenticeship' website provides advice services not only to apprentices but also their parents and schools.

Effective vocational education and guidance should start early and cover all levels of education – from primary to higher education – and all potential providers, formal and informal.

Source: Cedefop.

5.4. Communicating, cooperating, accepting and coordinating

5.4.1. Communicating and cooperating

Communication and cooperation among stakeholders is crucial for the success of apprenticeship.

The accompanying by-laws to the new Law on Apprenticeship (2017) should further elaborate and explain the roles of all the stakeholders implementing apprenticeships, emphasising the equal stake and responsibility of schools and employers in making it a success. This means that employers should engage more in defining the learning content and learning outcomes, quality assurance and in learner assessment (formative and summative).

Given that employers up to now have not been equal partners with schools, they might find the support of the latter essential (see Table 9 for the results of the company survey). A platform or a network supporting cooperation and exchange among companies and schools could be considered (with the support of the CPI) while the results of the projects

on cooperation (some coordinated by the CPI) could be disseminated and mainstreamed (see also Box 3).

5.4.2. Accepting and coordinating roles and responsibilities

Following adoption of the Law on Apprenticeship, the MoESS should provide clear guidelines to VET schools/school centres, chambers and local authorities how to coordinate processes related to school-based programmes (particularly the implementation of the PTW) on the one hand and the apprenticeship pathway, on the other. The MoESS should also see that these actors have necessary capacity and resources, especially, the social partners.

Given that the Law on Apprenticeship entrusts more responsibilities to the chambers, it is a good opportunity for them to take more ownership of apprenticeship and support their members, as apprenticeship is a pathway most linked to the world of work and an effective way to meet the needs of companies for skilled employees. The chambers could also reach out to the organisers of practice in schools and provide them with up-to-date data and guidance.

Currently, trade unions are little involved in VET. In the past, some trade unions (such as the Slovenian trade union confederation) took part in VET-related projects and gained some knowledge and experience. Their empowerment and inclusion in the decision-making processes are important. Provided they have more resources and capacity, their future action in apprenticeship could take the following directions:

- (a) monitoring the implementation of apprenticeship in sectors where unions are most active;
- (b) career guidance and counselling in secondary schools to offer students impartial information about different occupations and associated working conditions;
- (c) becoming members of the governing boards of VET schools and influencing strategic decisions in selected VET institutions;
- (d) encouraging older workers to supervise apprentices in companies and so ensuring transfer of knowledge and skills to the next generation of skilled workers.

The CPI may have two important roles: as a leading institution in research and evaluation and as a coordinating institution that would enable the apprenticeship system to function as a whole. The CPI could also coordinate intermediate and final examinations (in cooperation with the

National Examination Centre). In the beginning, the CPI could also build the capacity of the chambers and trade unions by training staff who would work with companies.

Other players may also have a role. The Institute for Adult Education can bring in knowledge and expertise from the perspective of adult education, possibly contributing to training of mentors; the Public Employment Service could function as information points for employers, schools and parents; their career centres can be used to full potential as well.

Although responsibilities for apprenticeship are shared, it is important to coordinate stakeholders in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. This demands a strong coordinating body (see Box 7 for an example from the Netherlands) to provide overall guidance for those involved and to ensure achievement of the general objectives. This coordinating body could also act as a guarantee when companies or schools fail to provide quality learning. The CPI or the chambers can take up this role.

Box 7. Coordinating body for apprenticeships in the Netherlands

Across the EU, there are different examples of central bodies that coordinate the programming and implementation of apprenticeships. The Dutch system is similar to the one envisaged in Slovenia: upper and post-secondary (non-tertiary) VET programmes have a school-based and an apprenticeship route, both leading to the same VET qualification.

The Foundation for Cooperation between Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) ⁽³⁶⁾ provides advice on VET policy to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and is a single contact point that draws up recommendations and advice on education and labour market, against the background of social interests.

Since 2015, a new organisation model has been implemented. The SBB took over the tasks of the 17 VET expertise centres and now aids discussions between VET and labour market representatives within eight 'sector chambers'. VET and social partners are equally represented in each sector chamber. The SBB also works on themes with a cross regional and cross-sector focus. VET institutions and companies work together within the SBB to provide an effective training offer.



⁽³⁶⁾ <https://www.s-bb.nl>

All VET students must complete an internship or apprenticeship during their training. The SBB has three main tasks in relation to this:

- maintaining the qualification structure;
- certifying and counselling learning companies;
- providing information about the labour market, the internships/apprenticeships and the efficiency of the training offer.

The board of the SBB is responsible for recognition of companies as official learning companies for vocational training; every four years the SBB assesses such companies based on their criteria. Frequent inspection can be made because of special circumstances. The SBB monitors the quality of the practical training/apprenticeships on annually. This is done through an online survey of practical trainers or contact people in the training company, students and practical training supervisors from the school. Their answers help training companies, schools and the SBB to improve the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships. A protocol of practical training was adopted by the VET Council, the SBB, SME Netherlands ⁽³⁷⁾, the VNO-NCW ⁽³⁸⁾ and the Ministry of Education on June 2009 that describes main responsibilities of relevant actors in the apprenticeship system (student, school, learning company, and SBB) in matching and preparing an apprenticeship, learning support, assessment, and evaluation.

Source: Elaboration based on documentation by SBB.

5.4.3. Introducing accountability

The existing Slovenian VET quality assurance model, based on the EQAVET principles, should embrace quality assurance for apprenticeship training (see Box 8 for examples of quality frameworks for apprenticeship).

⁽³⁷⁾ The SME Netherlands is the largest entrepreneur organisation in the Netherlands. <https://www.mkb.nl/over-mkb-nederland/english>

⁽³⁸⁾ The Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers is the largest employer organisation in the Netherlands. <https://www.vno-ncw.nl/>

Verification of learning places is currently the main QA mechanism for PTW and it is also envisaged as such for apprenticeship: verification criteria need to be discussed, while the chambers need to review their practices to improve verification. The following can be considered for improving PTW and apprenticeship quality assurance:

- (a) a quality assurance plan by a learning company as part of the verification process (the CPI can (help) develop a template and guidelines);
- (b) general guidelines on ⁽³⁹⁾:
 - (i) content and structure of the training plan, how to develop and implement it and what the roles of each actor are;
 - (ii) time allocation to mentors for apprentices and for their own professional development;
 - (iii) what to do with non-compliance with the general guidelines (procedure for improvement or exclusion of company of the register);
- (c) improved monitoring of PTW results, such as employment results and apprentice feedback on apprenticeship quality;
- (d) after learning workplaces are verified, regular inspections to assess compliance with standards.

Box 8. **Quality assurance/frameworks at EU level**

At EU level there are several quality frameworks for apprenticeships that include quality criteria for successful apprenticeships.

- The European Commission, as an outcome of the ET2020 Working Group on VET, identified 20 guiding principles for high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning ⁽⁴⁰⁾. These principles relate to national governance and social partner involvement; support for companies, particularly SMEs, offering apprenticeships; attractiveness of apprenticeships and improved career guidance; and quality assurance in work-based learning.
- The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) proposed 20 quality standards for apprenticeships ⁽⁴¹⁾. The ETUC framework proposes, for example, to protect apprenticeships against misuse by using the term only for statutory



⁽³⁹⁾ The guidelines can build on the basis of the existing materials developed by the CPI, such as the guide for organisers of PTW, for students, for mentors: <http://www.cpi.si/kurikul/podlage-za-pripravo-izobrazevalnih-programov/prakticno-usposabljanje-z-delom-pud.aspx>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14881&langId>

⁽⁴¹⁾ <https://www.etuc.org/publications/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships#.WQMxWDGQ5rI>

apprenticeships. It also highlights equitable cost sharing and the role of financial incentives for employers.

- The European social partners, BusinessEurope and ETUC, agreed on a shared vision for quality and effective apprenticeships and work-based learning ⁽⁴²⁾ in December 2016. The report highlights ‘shared responsibility’ as the essential element in functioning apprenticeships and work-based learning.

The frameworks developed show a high-level of consensus on what is considered important for developing quality apprenticeships in terms of cooperation, knowledge-sharing, raising attractiveness of VET and work-based learning, looking for recognition and permeable learning pathways, providing support structures and measures for engaging SMEs.

The OECD mentions external accreditation of companies as an important aspect of success, alongside companies that are committed to the programme and do not aim to use apprentices/trainees as sources of (subsidised) free or cheap labour or as replacement for regular staff. The OECD also considers the existence of an individual apprenticeship/traineeship agreement as another success factor in quality placements.

Source: Elaboration based on relevant documents including: European Commission (2015); European Commission (2016a); ETUC/Unionlearn (2016); BusinessEurope (2016b); OECD (2012).

5.5. Ensuring availability of competent mentors in companies

Mentor quality of is an element identified during the TCR as a significant issue worthy of special attention. The following can contribute to improving the quality of mentors, both for PTW and apprenticeship:

- (a) define and agree on the competences and qualifications required for mentors in PTW and apprenticeship. Slovenia has not set down what pedagogical/andragogical competences mentors should have, so there is a need to define competences and training standards for mentors, with a possibility for validating training-related competences acquired on the job (through portfolios or references);

⁽⁴²⁾ https://www.etuc.org/sites/www.etuc.org/files/publication/files/final_version_acvt_opinion.pdf

- (b) develop a national training module for mentors to acquire minimum, or to develop further, pedagogical/andragogical competences, possibly leading to a professional certificate. Existing training programmes can serve as a basis, such as:
 - (i) the 24-hour programme for mentors in companies (*Program usposabljanja mentorjev za praktično usposabljanje dijakov oziroma praktično izobraževanje študentov pri delodajalcu*);
 - (ii) programme for the acquisition of pedagogical-andragogical education (*Program za pridobitev pedagoško andragoške izobrazbe*) for teachers in VET programmes, instructors, organisers of practice, laboratory assistants.

The modules can be developed centrally (by the CPI in cooperation with the social partners) and approved by the National Expert Council for VET. They can be delivered by various accredited providers, from both education and labour market;

- (c) potential for going beyond meeting minimum requirements to continuing professional development opportunities should be improved, with earmarked funding available. This could be done by providing additional modules on different topics, such as use of ICT, engaging in evaluations and assessments, and dealing with students with special needs. More exchange and mobility can also be encouraged; VET teachers may work for a while as mentor in a company while mentors work as teachers, sharing experiences and improving alignment between industry and VET. The TCR findings suggest that, at the start, the State is expected to finance and provide training for mentors from companies.

Box 9. Improving mentor competences in Germany

In some countries, legal frameworks, such as the German trainer aptitude test, indicate the competences trainers should possess. The trainer aptitude regulation (Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung, AEVO) requires trainers to pass a special aptitude examination (conducted by a chamber). This assesses the most important skills and competences individuals must have to be authorised to act as a responsible trainer (this person can coordinate and supervise other employees who work with students). The competences required are outlined in four areas of activity which follow the structure of the apprenticeship training:



- assessment of vocational training requirements and planning of training;
- preparing training and participating in trainee recruitment;
- conducting training;
- concluding training.

Source: Elaboration based on European Commission (2012a); Cedefop (2016).

5.6. Developing a sustainable funding model and non-financial support

Authorities and the social partners should develop a clear action plan to support apprenticeships. The plan could rely on the European Structural and Investment Funds up to 2020, though this is close and leaves little time for planning and use of available resources. After 2020, EU support will possibly decrease, so decision-makers should think of a supporting model combining financial and non-financial measures that could sustain itself in the long run.

Companies need financial capacity to embrace apprenticeship but can also benefit from non-financial support that can often outweigh the financial. Focusing policies on providing financial support to companies and the chambers may result in poor implementation of the apprenticeship and fading out of the system after the financial means diminish. Focus on a set of non-financial support measures is desired. For example, the State should finance and support training of mentors in companies, currently considered a preferred option by most stakeholders.

Adoption of the new law can be accompanied by:

- (a) development of guidelines for stakeholders (schools, employers, mentors, organisers of practice, apprentices) involved in apprenticeship: how to implement what is in the law, with clear details what should be done, by whom, how, when;
- (b) informing companies on potential to take apprentices and students and on related responsibilities. Chambers should inform employers on costs and benefits of apprenticeships, so they are aware of the added value of apprenticeship programmes and more inclined to engage with them. A cost-benefit model should be built in the MoESS pilot project to collect reliable cost data. Chambers could be more active in finding other

channels of communication and mobilisation of the companies (including media campaigns, particularly at the onset of the apprenticeship, presentations at various fairs);

- (c) creating a strong and stable team within the CPI (or one of the ministries) for implementation of apprenticeship: who takes direct responsibility for developing them;
- (d) upgrading the online platform *Moja izbira*/My choice, to embrace the matching function. It could function as a stable platform that could be used by all participants in their search for and assessment of apprenticeship places;
- (e) chambers can use this opportunity to provide more support to companies by:
 - (i) providing matching services in finding candidates for companies (possibly collaborating with the CPI on the *Moja izbira* platform;
 - (ii) unifying the approach to and making the registry of verified companies more user-friendly, regularly updated and linked to quality assurance mechanisms;
 - (iii) informing schools about participating companies and compliance with quality criteria;
 - (iv) providing administrative support to micro and small companies in coordinating their day-to-day apprenticeship activities. This may encourage the companies to take on apprentices;
 - (v) creating a platform or a forum (possibly an annual event) for schools and companies to meet and to share experiences. It might also be useful to award a prize to best practices/companies, to improve the public image of the status of a verified company.

Box 10. Experience of a sustainable funding model for apprenticeships in several EU countries

Cost sharing can take many different forms.

- In Romania, a new law introduced in 2013 included a clause that permits apprenticeships to be financed by sources other than the State budget, such as donations, sponsorships, employers' own sources and grants obtained through ESF funding. This has made apprenticeships more attractive for employers and boosted the number of apprenticeship contracts from only 41 between 2005 and 2010 to over 380 in 2013-15.



- EU structural funds are limited and will diminish over time. So countries are searching for alternative funding sources for apprenticeships. One such alternative – the training fund – is currently being discussed in Lithuania, seeking to establish a sustainable apprenticeship system.
- Training funds, private, public or semi-private, are applied in EU Member States including Denmark, Ireland, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland. In Hungary, companies pay contributions to the national training fund, which is then used to finance dual VET. Practical training in a company is financed from its own sources: a company can spend its vocational training contribution on related costs and can also claim further expenses from the national employment fund. In Poland, employers can be reimbursed for apprentice wage and social security insurance costs from the labour fund financed from the State budget and company contributions. Sectoral training funds in the Netherlands provide budget for companies for practical training of apprentices on the work floor (depending on the sector).
- In 2015 the British government decided to introduce an apprenticeship levy on employers in England in order to fund an increase in the number of apprentices and to address emerging skills shortages.

Source: Elaboration based on BusinessEurope (2016a).



6. Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

Slovenia had a previous tradition of apprenticeship, which was a typical training route for many generations up to the late 1970s, when it was interrupted. Around a quarter of a century later, after Slovenia gained statehood, an attempt was made to (re)introduce an apprenticeship system, taking the dual systems of Austria, Germany and Switzerland as models; this was also abolished without gaining a momentum. The current effort to implement apprenticeship in Slovenia is taking place in a situation where VET is seen by many stakeholders as the responsibility of the State, specifically the MoESS.

While this report was being finalised, the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Law on Apprenticeship (8 May 2017). Slovenia, therefore, finds itself at a crossroads where more decisions need to be taken to make the law work to increase the employment of the young, supporting their transition to the labour market, and for more effective skill development and utilisation. Steps need to be taken towards a collective skills formation system, in which the social partners take more ownership and play a more decisive role in all aspects of apprenticeship and VET, from strategic design to implementation and monitoring.

List of abbreviations

ALMPMs	active labour market policy measures
CPI	National Institute for Vocational Education and Training
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EAfA	European alliance for apprenticeship
ESF	European Social Fund
ET	education and training
ITC	intercompany training centres
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LM	labour market
MoESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
MoLFSAE0	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MS	Member States
NVQs	national vocational qualifications
PTW	practical training at the workplace (used of all types of education programmes at secondary and tertiary level)
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
TCR	thematic country reviews
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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Cedefop thematic country reviews on apprenticeships: analytical framework

Distinguishing features:

- systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre;
- an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance);
- an employer assumes responsibility for the company-based part of the programme leading to a qualification.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
1. Place in the ET system	Apprenticeship is defined and regulated in a legal framework (a legally regulated and recognised learning path).
	Apprenticeship leads to a formally recognised qualification, covering both learning in the education and training institution and in the company.
	Apprenticeship offers both horizontal and vertical pathways to further specialisation or education at higher levels.
2. Governance structures	Roles and responsibilities of the key players (the State, social partners, schools, VET providers, companies) at national, regional, local levels are clearly defined and distributed: decision-making, implementation, advisory, control.
	One coordination and decision-making body is nominated.
	Social partners understand and recognise the importance of apprenticeship to a skilled labour force.
	Employer and employee representatives are actively engaged at all levels.
3. Training content and learning outcomes	Curricula and programmes are developed based on existing qualification standards and/or occupational profiles.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
3. Training content and learning outcomes	Standards are broader than the needs of companies and are expressed in learning outcomes.
	The content and expected outcomes of company and school-based learning are clearly distributed and form a coherent sequence.
	Qualification standards/occupational standards/curricula are regularly evaluated and updated.
	Curricula define the alternance between learning venues and duration.
	(Minimum) requirements to access apprenticeship programmes are stipulated.
	Final assessment is common for both learning venues and independent.
4. Cooperation among learning venues	There is cooperation, coordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the venues as well as established feedback mechanisms.
	A school, a company and an apprentice together develop a training plan, based on the curriculum and qualification standard.
	A training plan ensures that learning in the company covers the full set of practical skills and competences required for a qualification.
	There are mechanisms to ensure continuity of learning in both venues, including in case of a company's failure to provide training during the course.
	One of the venues takes up (is designated by law) the coordinating role in the process.
5. Participation of and support to companies	Rights and obligations of companies providing training are legally stipulated.
	There are strategies, initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of benefits of taking apprentices, related responsibilities and available incentives.
	There are minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeship places and/or an accreditation procedure.
	There is a system of support (non-financial) to companies (especially SMEs).

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
5. Participation of and support to companies	There is recognition, and even award, for companies that provide quality apprenticeships.
	Employers' organisations play a key role in engaging and supporting companies.
6. Requirements and support to teachers and in-company trainers	Companies must assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to accompany apprentices.
	There are stipulated requirements for qualification and competences of an apprentice tutor.
	An apprentice tutor in a company must have qualification in the vocation he/she trains for.
	An apprentice tutor in a company must have some proof of pedagogical/ didactic competence.
	There is a provision of training for in-company trainers to develop and update their pedagogical/didactic and transversal competences.
	There are mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between in-company trainers and VET teachers in schools.
	There is a clear indication who (teacher or trainer) has ultimate responsibility for apprentices' learning.
7. Financing and cost-sharing mechanisms	Apprenticeship companies pay wages as defined in the contractual agreement between the company and the apprentice and/or indirect costs (materials, trainers' time).
	The State is responsible for financing VET schools and/or paying grants to engage apprentices.
	The duration and organisation of apprenticeships is such that it allows companies to recuperate the investment through apprentices' work.
	There are incentives (subsidies, tax deductions) to encourage companies to take on apprentices, generally and/or in specific sectors or occupations.
	Social partners cover part of the costs (direct and/or indirect).
8. Quality assurance	Quality assurance mechanisms exist at system level as well as at the level of training companies and schools.
	Responsibilities for quality assurance are shared. It is clear who is in charge of what aspects of quality assurance.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
9. Apprentice's working and learning conditions	Rights and obligations of apprentices are legally stipulated.
	Apprenticeship is an attractive option for learners.
	There is a reference point (responsible body) that informs the apprentice of rights and responsibilities of all parties and supports him/her in case of problems.
	An apprentice has an employment contract with the company and enjoys all rights and benefits of an employee and fulfils all responsibilities.
	A training contract is signed between a company, a school (training centre) and an apprentice that defines the training programme.
	An apprentice is protected in case of company failure (bankruptcy, for example) to provide training.
	An apprentice has access to guidance and counselling services.
10. Responsiveness to labour market	There are institutional procedures that allow apprenticeship to respond to or to anticipate the needs of the labour market.
	Outputs and outcomes of apprenticeship are regularly monitored and evaluated.
	<i>Ex-ante</i> and/or <i>ex-post</i> impact evaluation of apprenticeship are in place.

Source: Cedefop.





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APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW

SLOVENIA

Putting apprenticeship on track
in Slovenia

This publication is the final report of Cedefop's thematic country review of apprenticeship in Slovenia, conducted between June 2015 and March 2017 at the request of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia. The report presents the key findings and suggestions for action, including reflections on the Law on Apprenticeship that was evolving at the time of the review and was adopted in May 2017. The review suggests starting by laying the foundation for a clear vision of, and broad policy for, apprenticeship. It should continue with the building blocks of careful piloting and monitoring, building on the existing knowledge base; motivating companies and learners through flexibility and customised support, including improved career guidance; enhancing communication, cooperation and coordination among all actors and acceptance of their responsibilities; ensuring that companies have competent mentors; and developing a sustainable funding model accompanied by non-financial support.

4157 EN – TI-02-17-828-EN-N – doi:10.2801/715527

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Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-896-2465-7



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