



spotlight on VET

SLOVAKIA

VET in Slovakia

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) in Slovakia is school-based, with periods of work-based learning based on contracts between secondary VET schools and companies. IVET usually starts at upper secondary level. At the age of 15, pupils choose a VET study field, with a *maturita* school-leaving certificate (ISCED 3A) that allows graduates to enter higher education, or a training programme with a certificate of apprenticeship (ISCED 3C). In 2012/13, 451 VET programmes were approved according to the decree on secondary schools, and an additional 55 new programmes were piloted.

Secondary IVET programmes comprise:

- two to three-year ISCED 2C training programme for basic school low-achievers, ends with a final exam; in exceptional cases there is also a certificate of apprenticeship;
- three to four-year ISCED 3C training, ends with a certificate of apprenticeship;
- four to five-year ISCED 3A study programme with extended number of hours of practical training, ends with a *maturita* school-leaving certificate (in most cases also with a certificate of apprenticeship);
- four to five-year ISCED 3A study programme, more theory-focused, ends with a *maturita* school-leaving certificate.

These programmes are typically offered by secondary specialised schools (SOŠ); similar programmes adjusted for students with special needs and specific IVET programmes for mentally challenged students are offered within the special schools stream. A specific IVET option is with conservatories offering six-year and eight-year ISCED 5B studies.

Post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes offered by SOŠ and conservatories comprise:

- two-year ISCED 3A follow-up study programme intended for ISCED 3C graduates, ends with a *maturita* school-leaving certificate;
- minimum six-month ISCED 4A programmes intended for ISCED 3A graduates, end with a post-*maturita* exam;
- minimum two-year ISCED 4A qualifying programmes intended for ISCED 3A graduates, end with a *maturita* school-leaving certificate (second *maturita* with a specific vocational component);

- minimum two-year ISCED 5B special programmes, end with an *absolutorium* diploma;
- three-year ISCED 5B higher professional programmes, end with an *absolutorium* diploma.

Data for 2011 indicate high vertical permeability. Of SOŠ ISCED 3A graduates registered in higher education programmes, and ISCED 3C graduates interested in further studies, 35% entered two-year ISCED 3A programmes. Nevertheless, there are two weak points: the lack of practice-oriented tertiary VET programmes needed for the labour market; and underdeveloped procedures for validation of prior learning.

Governance

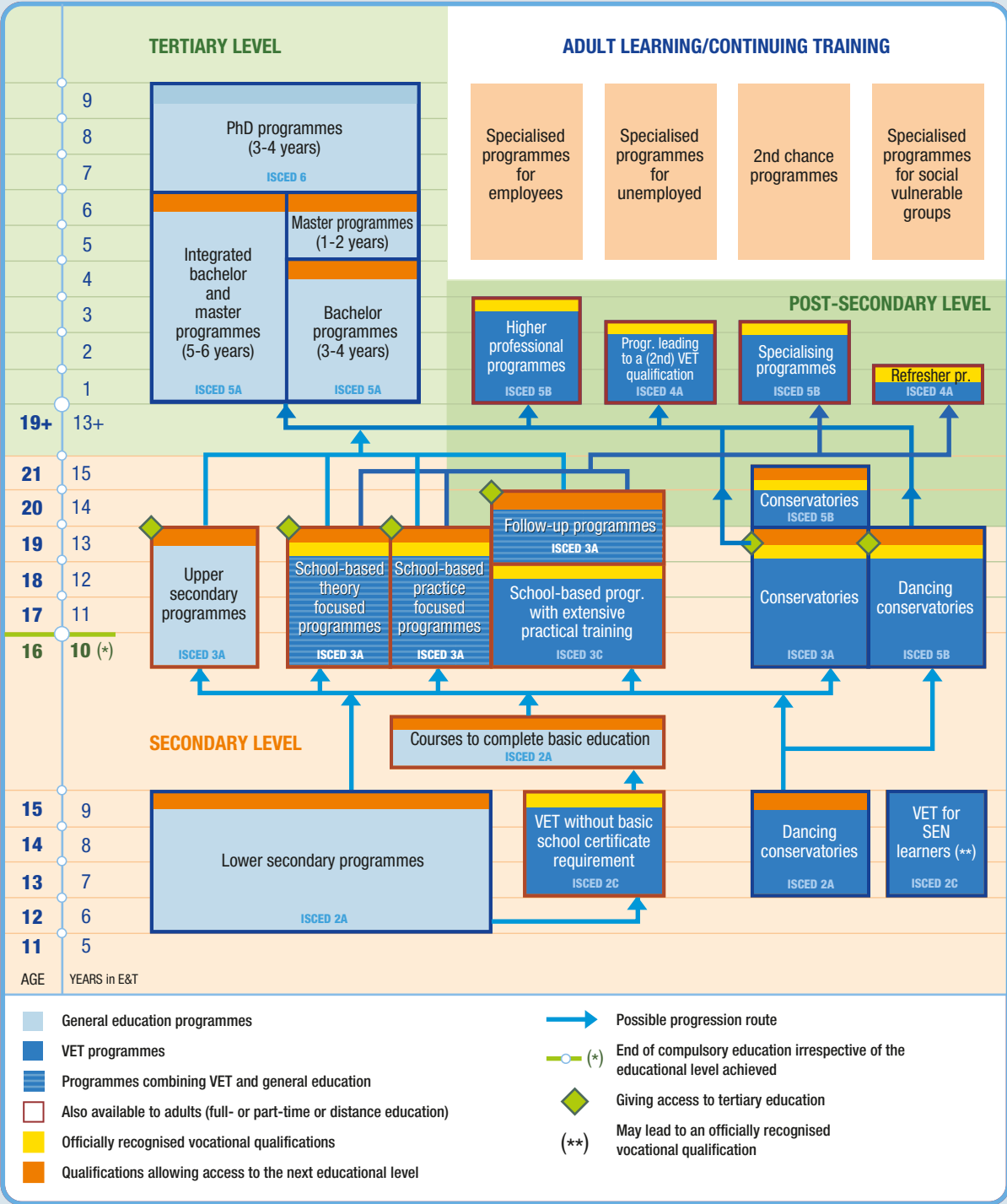
IVET in Slovakia, with the exception of the health sector and some specific occupations (fireman, police officer), is predominantly regulated by national/regional educational authorities supported by the newly empowered bodies introduced by the Act on VET 2008: the National VET Council, an ultimate coordinating body affiliated with the government discussing all the important VET-related policy and legislative documents; regional VET councils; sectoral VET councils; and 'sectoral assignees' set by legislation as professional counterparts to education authorities and as defenders of employers' interests in the respective fields of study.

The role of the social partners has been strengthened in all phases:

- programming: the mandatory national framework for curricula is discussed to achieve a better match to labour market needs;
- curriculum design: curricula are developed autonomously by schools based on national education programmes, but must be discussed with employers to comply with labour market needs prior to implementation;
- qualifications award: employer representative involvement in school-leaving examination has been reinforced.

There are currently no incentives available to support adult learning. Provision of learning opportunities is not regulated by the State, except for training the unemployed, which is regulated and provided by the Ministry of Labour within its active labour market policy. Unemployed training is cofunded by the European Social Fund.

VET in Slovakia's education and training system



NB: EQF levels have not yet been defined. ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Slovakia.

Distinctive features of VET

The Slovak secondary VET stream is traditionally very strong. While the share of graduates from ISCED 3A general programmes has increased from 17.2% to 27.8%, and those from ISCED 3A VET from 53.1% to 54.7%, ISCED 3C graduates as a share of ISCED 3 graduates declined from 29.6% to 17.5% between 1999 and 2010, due to the low attractiveness of ISCED 3C programmes. Consequently, the country suffers from shortages of young, skilled blue-collar workers and craftsmen.

Slovakia has a very high youth education attainment level, with 93.3% of the population aged 20 to 24 having completed at least upper secondary education, compared to the EU-27 average of 79.5% in 2011.

Slovak IVET is an example of strongly State-regulated, predominantly school-based IVET. It traditionally offers a variety of programmes aiming to provide opportunities to achieve a high level of academic knowledge and skills together with vocational skills. After significant separation from the business world during the period of economic transformation, IVET is gradually engaging businesses more into its governance to strengthen alignment with labour market needs.

Challenges

Slovakia already meets the Europe 2020 benchmark concerning early leavers from education and training (5% compared to 13.5% in the EU-27 in 2011). It also expects to reach the 40% benchmark in 30 to 34 year-olds with tertiary education.

However, there are several challenges that partly relate to VET:

- a decline of abilities in reading, mathematics and science, as visible from PISA and TIMSS long-term data, that affects VET studies inter alia in mechanical and electrical engineering;
- despite recent efforts to introduce fiscal instruments to improve adult participation in lifelong learning indicated in the 2012 action plan to the 2011 lifelong learning strategy, it is unlikely that Slovakia will meet the respective 2020 benchmark.

According to the 2012 European Council recommendations, Slovakia should act on the following:

- labour market relevance of education and vocational training;
- improving education of vulnerable groups including Roma;
- ensuring labour market reintegration of adults.

The first two issues are addressed by proposals under discussion and measures envisaged for 2013. Supporting work-based learning, and even partial introduction of dual training, is being prepared, as well as comprehensive Roma reintegration measures. More attention is needed for the development of short-cycle vocational training, which was explicitly stressed by the Council, recalling long-term suggestions from national experts.

Despite substantial progress in reforming VET since 2008, additional investments are needed to:

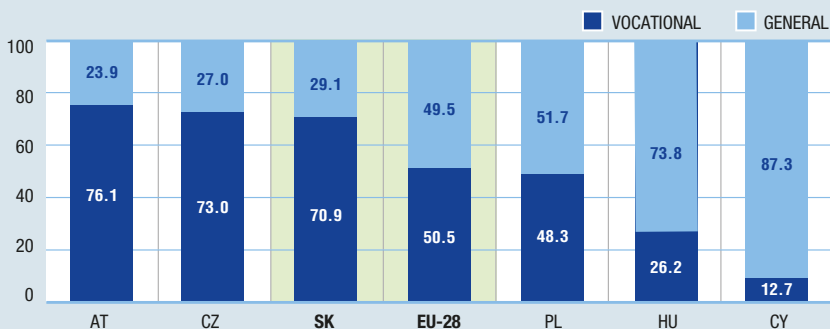
- increase equipment quality in schools;
- increase VET teacher and trainer profession attractiveness;
- invest in VET research and labour market analyses to improve understanding of labour market needs;
- track graduates and support national employer surveys required to identify skills needs and gaps in the workplace;
- extend expert capacity to learn from international expertise and capitalise on good practice experiences.



Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

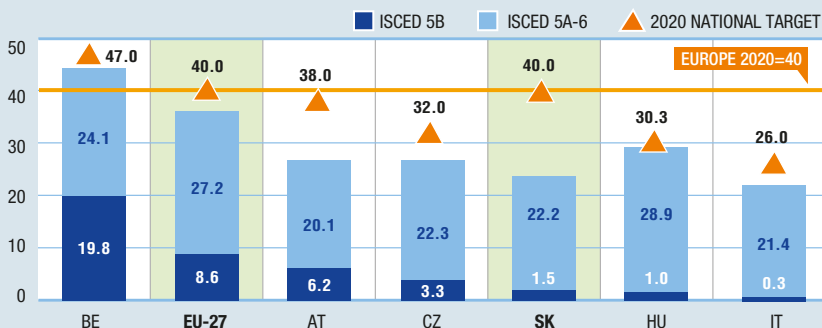
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2011



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 28.6.2013.

Tertiary education by type

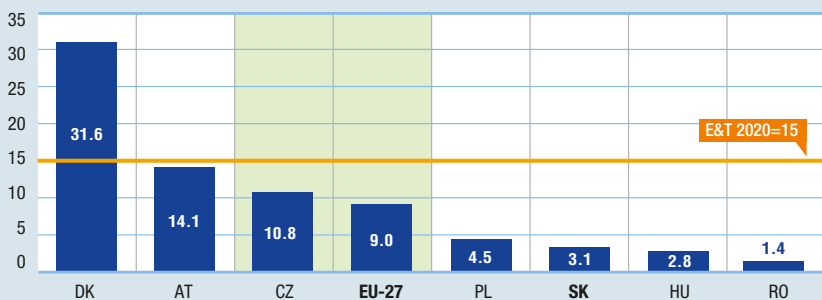
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2012



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.7.2013.

Lifelong learning

% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2012

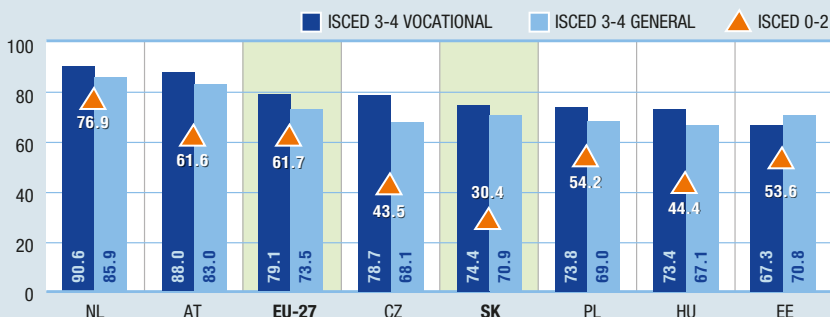


NB: Data for Poland are provisional.

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 3.7.2013.

Employment rates by highest level of educational attainment

20-34 year-olds no longer in education by highest level of educational attainment, 2009



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, 2009 ad hoc module of the EU labour force survey, date of extraction 19.9.2012.



Further information

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www.upsvar.sk	Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
www.statistics.sk	Statistical Office
www.uips.sk	Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education
www.refernet.sk	ReferNet Slovakia
www.saaic.sk	National LLP Agency
www.radavladayovp.sk	National VET Council
www.zbierka.sk	Electronic collection of laws (in Slovak only)



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Publications Office

978-92-896-1402-3



9 789289 614023