



VET Policy Report Slovak Republic 2008

Progress in the policy priority areas for
vocational education and training



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REFERNET



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1. National political and socio-economic context

1.1. National political/policy context

Three periods of national policy can be identified within the period of transition of Slovakia to democracy and market economy. The 1990s were marked by gradual restructuring economy accompanied by severe changes in the labour market and increasing regional disparities; by lacking means for education and in particular, for VET due to broken links between VET schools and enterprises. This, together with changing educational preferences of students and/or their parents created a too complicated environment for a sustainable VET policy. The Ministry of Education and other players have reacted predominantly on permanently emerging problems of daily routine and institution building related to establishing the new state and its governance infrastructure. Interesting content related experiments initiated immediately after the political change in 1989, full of personal commitment and efforts to share experience and learn from peers from other countries, gradually lost support in politically and economically turbulent times.

In the second period, in 2000-2005, the most important structural reforms were accomplished, for which Slovakia was praised by political analysts and international institutions. In this period the government was fully concentrated on creating pro-entrepreneurial environment and in particular on achievement of macro-economic stability. At the same time it failed to invest in human resources. Restrictive budgets for education were substantiated by “risk of inefficiency as a consequence of slow progress in reforms in education” and insufficient funding of research and development by similarly strange prioritisation of “first making economy strong and just after that investing more in research and development”. Significantly, exactly in this period, financing regional schools per capita was introduced contributing substantially to cost effectiveness. At the same time, however, no quality standards were set and no quality assurance system introduced to counterbalance cost restrictive financing, which resulted in a decrease of quality of education. Although regions and municipalities were transferred responsibility towards regional schooling, including VET, introduced fiscal mechanisms were supportive for short-term savings rather than the regional human resource development. Voices warning before a decrease of quality of graduates and increasing risks of severe mismatch between demand and supply in emerging regional labour markets were neglected. Although the National Programme of Education and Training for the forthcoming 15 to 20 years was adopted by the parliament in 2001, subsequent steps - translation of reform ideas into concrete measures, were not made. Moreover, underestimation of the importance of evidence based policy and a failure to build networks of experts in support of educational policies and VET policies contributed to the lack of relevant hard data. Slovakia even failed to participate, as a single relevant country, in important international data collecting projects as CVTS2 and PISA 2000. Nevertheless, in contrast to 1990s, the country became politically stabilised - in the track joining EU; and improving economically - creating enough resources in order to invest more into human resources. This was however not done and the country did not move from the bottom place among candidate countries in a share of per capita investment in education to per capita GDP.

Since 2005, within the third period, the governments have recognised importance of human resource development. By elaboration of the National Lisbon Strategy for the first time objectives in support of human resource development were set complemented by concrete measures laid down in subsequent action plans. Interrelated Minerva Programme was created to implement and finance measures identified to develop knowledge economy in Slovakia. Many of these activities were later incorporated into the National Reform Programme initiated by the European Union in all member states. Nevertheless, no substantial results were achieved during a short time of implementation stopped by elections in mid 2006.

It must be conceded that long-term period of passivity in educational policies and, in particular, weak VET policies have caused problems that are now visible to everybody. Suddenly, the government has faced an urgent need of curricular reform (see Priority 1 in the table below) delayed over decade and a creation of new legislation to stimulate cooperation of VET with employers (see Priority 2). Except for a long lasting problem with education and employment of part of Roma population, there has not been a substantial problem with equity and after period of restriction with (fiscal) efficiency. The most urgent problems have been the following:

- to improve quality in provision of VET and to make quality assurance a part of providers' accountability practice;
- to strengthen partnerships among social partners in policies' setting and policies' evaluation, and between decision makers, researchers and analysts to strengthen evidence based approach in policy making.

The government has a serious chance to implement important structural reforms in education and human resource development, as there are means and appropriate time available and as many important players originally only passively positive towards reforms are changing their mind. Besides national sources (11.4% increase in tax collection in 2007) there have been EUR 726.8 million allocated for Operational Programme Education and EUR 1 422 million for Operational Programme Research and Development. However a warning must be expressed:

- There is a risk of mismanagement in spending the means, unless strong monitoring and evaluation of all public projects' and in particular ESF projects' results is introduced.
- There is a risk of decrease of added value from ESF, in case frustration of experienced ESF project managers is not encountered and accountability continues to be mixed up with administrative harassment.
- There is a risk of hasty partial reforms, without coherence in policies as a consequence of long-term period of passivity in VET policy and due to pressure for urgent actions of employers desperately lacking labour force.

2008 is the year of huge legislative changes with strong impact on education including VET. New Education Act has been adopted in May 2008 and it will come into force in September 2008, important amendment of the Act on employment services has been valid since 1st May 2008 and three new acts (on VET, on LLL and on pedagogical staff) are in the pipeline. Details are given the table below. In addition, a new governmental strategy paper "Slovakia 21" offering new government's vision on creating knowledge based society and replacing the former Minerva Programme, complemented by a set of concrete measures within action plans, is also in the pipeline.

Table 1
10 policy priorities

| | Policy priority | Main causes and reasons | Policy approach |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1. | Curricular reform based on state educational programme offering framework and core curriculum for the development of school educational programmes | Decentralisation of curriculum development has been recognised inevitable in order to adjust educational programmes to local/regional needs and to promote innovation in VET content and pedagogy. | Original recommendation introduced in 1990 referred as 10/30 formula meaning that 10% week hours and 30% of content of original uniform curricula can be replaced to meet local/regional needs after agreement of relevant stakeholders is replaced by newly adopted Education Act in May 2008. State educational programmes for VET schools have been developed by the State Institute of Vocational |

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| | | | Education. Schools are offered a guide for developing school educational programmes supported by series of working seminars in all regional capitals in May and June 2008. |
| 2. | Adjusting VET to labour market needs | After the period of a very high structural unemployment there is suddenly a lack of labour force, in particular in metal engineering, automotive industry, construction, electrical engineering, caused by a boom in these sectors stimulated by large foreign direct investments, severe decline in population and a lack of graduates from relevant programmes and by huge employment migration to EU countries. | A change in legislation has been agreed between the government and the employers and a multi-partisan group of experts has been created to develop the first ever act on VET. This act will stipulate details and complement the Education Act, which originally has covered both general and vocational education. Legislative principles were agreed upon in May 2008 and the draft law is to be submitted to the government in November 2008. The act on VET newly stipulates cooperation of social partners in programming, delivery and evaluation of VET, including incentives to guarantee quality assurance and matching the labour market needs. |
| 3. | Improving the status of pedagogical staff by better remuneration, better continuing training, structured career path scheme based on professional standards | Decrease in attractiveness of profession causing ageing and a low inflow of quality teachers and trainers in VET. | The strategy paper for the professional development of teachers in a career system was adopted by the government on 18 th April 2007. A gradual increase in remuneration up to 1.4 (1.2 in 2011) of the average national wage from 0.97 in 2006 was approved. 44 sets of professional standards for 4 career levels and 11 (sub)categories of pedagogical staff are in the process of development. The Act on pedagogical staff is in the pipeline. |
| 4. | Improving continuing training of adults, strengthening lifelong learning by both better institutionalisation and by recognition of non-formal and informal learning | Very low share of participating in lifelong learning (3.9% in 2007, Eurostat) deeply below the EU benchmark 12.5%, lacking work force despite high unemployment (11.1% in 2007, Eurostat, the highest in the EU) and a very high share of the long-term unemployed (in case of | The strategy paper on lifelong learning and lifelong guidance has been adopted by the government on 25 th April 2007 followed by the action plan and legislative principles adoption, both in 2007. The Act on lifelong learning is in the pipeline. |

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| | | unemployed over 2 years it was 167.4 thousand, representing 57.4% of all unemployed in 2007, according to the Statistical Office, LFS). | |
| 5. | Increasing the level of education of ethnic Roma; preventing Roma living in settlements from social exclusion | <p>According to the 2001 Census, 89 920 inhabitants of Slovakia declared themselves Roma, among which there were only 19.9% people aged 20-24 years with ISCED 3 and higher level of education.</p> <p>According to demographic estimations, there were 379 200 ethnic Roma living in Slovakia in 2000, and according to a socio-graphic mapping from 2004, 40% of Roma lived in concentrated settlements with weak infrastructure, while 146 528 in settlements with inappropriate background for educating young people.</p> | In 2008 the government adopted a Medium-term Strategy of Development of Roma National Minority and a detailed policy paper on education of Roma children and pupils including development of secondary and tertiary education building on similar paper adopted in 2004 and on analytical paper on situation in education of Roma children and pupils from 2006. Projects to support Roma are traditionally co-funded internationally; many with substantial assistance of PHARE and later ESF (see also section 2.3.2., example 6). |
| 6. | Facilitate access of youth from socially disadvantaged families to secondary education | <p>There is a risk that students from socially disadvantaged families drop out from ISCED 3 education programmes after completing compulsory 10-year education due to school attendance related costs (travelling, meals, learning materials, etc.). A high share of socially disadvantaged families is of Roma ethnic origin with low education level and high unemployment rate.</p> <p>Completing secondary education and obtaining qualification is a basic precondition of a future higher living standard of children from these families.</p> <p>There are no statistics about ethnic Roma as it is considered discriminating. Measures address socially disadvantaged families.</p> | The relevant measure was set in 2004, originally addressing only students from families receiving social benefits and later expanded also on students from families with income below subsistence minimum. Scholarships are being regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 311/2004 Coll. amended by Decree No. 343/2006 Coll. and by subsequent methodological guidelines setting conditions for awarding scholarships. Scholarships are covered from the state budget and were co/financed by the ESF. The amount depends on educational achievement and can be ceased as a consequence of students' inappropriate behaviour. |
| 7. | Supporting cooperation of regional players to strengthen | Decentralisation of competences towards regions and municipalities have led to increased cost | ESF projects on learning regions were launched in 7 out of 8 regions in 2006. Experience from regions, where strong |

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| | regional development in order to manage human resources in line with the development of regional economies and labour markets | effectiveness in provision of education, however did not make local and regional authorities sensitive to strategic investment in education. | consortia containing regional authorities were built, indicated positive influence on regional development policies. The National Programme for Learning Regions adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2007, which has been co-funded by ESF builds on experience from pilot projects. |
| 8. | Better targeting of retraining of jobseekers | <p>Although retraining is considered an important tool of ALMP, efficiency of retraining activities was questioned as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dead weight of retraining was not regarded (and estimated in order to reduce the Mathew effect); - unemployed were retrained (even several times) without strict targeting on final placement. <p>In 2005 35 689 unemployed were enrolled in retraining (50 % of all applicants) while in 2006 only 8 374 (however 54% of all applicants) as a consequence of changes in policy. Furthermore, 56% of those in retraining were classified as coming from groups at risk (in particular long-term unemployed and people over 50 years of age).</p> | <p>Active labour market policy (ALMP) is regulated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (currently by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, as amended).</p> <p>Retraining is also co-financed by ESF, i.e. National project III in 2004-2006 and IIIA in 2006-2008. Although the change in number of the retrained was influenced also by change in ESF (transition from NP III to NP IIIA), the crucial impulse is related to the act amendment valid since 1st January 2006. Application for retraining was conditioned by recommendation of a counsellor within Individual Action Plan elaborated for the respective unemployed.</p> <p>Furthermore, co-financing by trainees was introduced. 100% of costs were reimbursed to trainees only for the first retraining activity, 75% for the second and only 50% for third and any other activity carried out within two years.</p> <p>Since 1st May 2008 labour offices have been expected to run their own retraining policy, and better targeting of retraining should be based on explicit statement of responsibilities within a written contract on retraining between the unemployed and labour office. On the other hand, trainees are again 100 % reimbursed and given higher benefits during retraining. By introducing this amendment of Act on employment services the Ministry of Labour declared</p> |

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| | | | adherence to the Commission's Communication concerning common principles of flexicurity. |
| 9 | Redesigning the national qualification system and creating the National Qualification Framework | Existing national qualification systems are sectorally managed and often they are very detailed. At the same time, partial qualifications are rarely recognised. Transparent qualification system is envisaged with a one-stop-shop portal containing national qualification framework aligned to EQF. | Creation of the National system of occupations stipulated by the amendment of the Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services, valid since 1 st May 2008 is aimed on creating a precondition for development of overarching national qualification system and NQF. A dedicated ESF project aimed at development of NSQ and NQF is planned to be launched soon. |
| 10 | Improving quality assurance in VET | Fiscal reform introducing financing per capita was not supplemented by introduction of quality assurance system. This fact contributed to the decrease of quality of graduates. The only measure making regional schools reflective on concrete tools of quality assurance was the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 9/2006 Coll. introducing self-evaluation within annual reporting on educational activities. According to the programming document for ESF Operational Programme Education 2007– 2013 creation of quality assurance system in education was identified as a priority for all segments of education. | Institutionalisation of quality assurance in CVET is stipulated by the Act on LLL leading to certification of LLL providers. With regard to IVET, quality assurance in higher education is prioritised within OP Education 2007-2013 Measure 1.2; with regard to regional schooling within measure 1.1. Measure 1.1 specific goal 4 is focusing explicitly on quality assurance in schools and within a list of prioritised activities of regions support of management systems in schools is again highlighted. All this is in contrast to 2004-2006 ESF period, where quality assurance in education has not been addressed by priorities explicitly. |

1.2. Socio-economic context

In 2008, Slovak economy is booming, featuring spectacular GDP growth together with fiscal stability. Achieving Maastricht criteria Slovakia will be joining eurozone starting 1st January 2009. It has been agreed in March 2007 to revalue the ERM2 central rate for the Slovak koruna against the Euro by 8.5% and again in June 2008 by maximum possible 15% from SKK 38.4550 to SKK 35.4424 and finally to SKK 30.1260.

Table 2
Selected 2002-2007 indicators

| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Real GDP growth (%) | 4.8 | 4.8 | 5.2 | 6.6 | 8.5 | 10.4 |
| Number of jobseekers* | 504 077 | 452 224 | 383 155 | 333 834 | 273 437 | 239 939 |
| Unemployment rate (%)* | 17.45 | 15.56 | 13.07 | 11.36 | 9.40 | 7.99 |
| Number of employed** | 2 127.0 | 2 164.6 | 2 170.4 | 2 216.2 | 2 301.4 | 2 357.3 |
| Employment growth (%)** | 0.2 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 2.1 | 3.8 | 2.4 |

Source: Statistical Office, Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (* disposable jobseekers), LFS (**)

Despite slowing down, the country is expecting a sustained high economic growth. According to the Institute of Finance Policy of the Ministry of Finance, 6.1% growth in GDP, 9.1% unemployment (LFS), 3.2% inflation (CPI), 1% employment growth, are forecasted for 2010. As far as GDP per capita (PPP) is concerned Slovakia is expected to overtake Portugal in 2009 reaching about 80% of the EU average in 2011 according to Ministry of Finance estimations.

The real wage growth, which was 4.3% in 2007, will remain 4.5% and above till 2010. In 2007, total personal loans from banks reached SKK 232 billion increasing dramatically from 174 billion in 2006 and 50 billion in 2003. The willingness of inhabitants to take loans signals both increasing incomes and positive sentiment towards future.

In the 2008 World Competitiveness Yearbook analysing and ranking the ability of nations to create and maintain an environment which can sustain the competitiveness of enterprises Slovakia has placed 30th improving in all indicators in comparison to 2007, however decreasing in one indicator compared to 2004.

Table 3
Slovakia ranking according to World Competitiveness in 2004-2008

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Economic Performance | 38 | 47 | 47 | 42 | 32 |
| Government Efficiency | 24 | 17 | 22 | 37 | 31 |
| Business Efficiency | 37 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 26 |
| Infrastructure | 36 | 35 | 37 | 38 | 36 |
| Overall ranking | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 | 30 |

Source: International Institute for Management Development, World Competitiveness Yearbook 2008

Another business related ranking also confirmed a solid status of Slovakia. In World Bank Doing Business 2008 Slovakia ranked 32nd as the best out of Central European new EU members and fourth among new market economies after three Baltic states.

Building upon the traditions in heavy industry, Slovakia's key industries today are mechanical engineering/machinery, in particular automotive. Increase in numbers of plant and machine operators is demonstrated in the table below.

Table 4

Comparison of employed by classification of occupation (in thousands) in selected years

| Classification of occupations (ISCO) | 2000 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2007 | Growth 07/00 | Growth 07/02 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Legislators, senior officials and managers | 132.0 | 107.3 | 137.8 | 131.8 | 128.5 | 0.97 | 1.20 |
| Scientists and brain workers | 215.0 | 213.4 | 203.6 | 251.9 | 246.9 | 1.15 | 1.16 |
| Technical, medical, pedagogical professionals | 371.4 | 397.5 | 391.3 | 431.1 | 443.1 | 1.19 | 1.11 |
| Administrative workers (officials) | 151.8 | 139.8 | 137.7 | 141.2 | 150.0 | 0.99 | 1.07 |
| Workers in services and trade | 275.3 | 296.1 | 307.4 | 323.4 | 332.5 | 1.21 | 1.12 |
| Qualified workers in agriculture, forestry | 27.5 | 26.4 | 26.5 | 25.9 | 23.1 | 0.84 | 0.88 |
| Craftsmen and qualified producers, repairmen | 422.6 | 407.3 | 418.4 | 421.9 | 434.4 | 1.03 | 1.07 |
| Plant and machine operators | 285.2 | 310.2 | 298.5 | 337.8 | 359.3 | 1.26 | 1.16 |
| Supporting and non-qualified staff | 220.7 | 222.5 | 208.8 | 223.0 | 227.6 | 1.03 | 1.02 |

Source: Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey

Automotive industry and electronics have attracted foreign investors earning from a cheap and skilled workforce and favourable geographic location, but also other sectors are increasing, in particular construction and diverse services.

Table 5

Comparison of numbers of employed by economic activity in 2002 and 2007 (in thousands)

| Economic activity (NACE) | 2002 | 2007 | Growth |
|---|-------|-------|--------|
| Agriculture | 131.4 | 99.3 | 0.76 |
| Industry (C-E) | 640.9 | 690.9 | 1.08 |
| Construction | 176.0 | 237.1 | 1.35 |
| Wholesale and retail trade | 271.5 | 300.0 | 1.10 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 68.5 | 102.0 | 1.49 |
| Transport, storage and communications | 154.4 | 165.3 | 1.07 |
| Financial intermediation | 39.8 | 47.6 | 1.20 |
| Real estate, renting and business activities | 103.3 | 145.7 | 1.41 |
| Public administration and defence | 149.7 | 159.8 | 1.07 |
| Education | 162.8 | 163.4 | 1.00 |
| Health and social work | 141.5 | 154.7 | 1.09 |
| Other community, social and personal service activities | 79.1 | 82.1 | 1.04 |

Source: Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey

Although employment is increasing and unemployment has fallen significantly, long-term unemployment remains very high. At the same time, the overall employment rate is still low, with particularly weak labour market participation among older workers and young women. Policies addressing this two most vulnerable groups and, in particular, a very high long-term unemployment of Roma, are urgently needed in order to increase labour participation. Nevertheless, the country is facing a shortage of labour force predominantly due to

- huge outflow to better paying EU countries and its insufficient taming as rising labour productivity is not followed by a substantial rise of wages;
- gradual decrease of birth rate since 1990.

Up to 250 thousand inhabitants of Slovakia, according to 2007 estimation of Slovak Foreign Policy Association, were employed abroad. About a half of the increase of employment during last two years was caused by the increase of employment abroad, according to this estimation.

2007 4th quarter LFS data indicated 185.7 thousand of workers working abroad, predominantly in industry (30%), in construction (27.8%) and in hotels and restaurants (12.6%).

A labour force outflow is not compensated by an inflow due to low attractiveness of the labour market and only recently removed quotas for workers from countries outside the EU (e.g. maximum 200 working positions for Ukrainians annually were originally set by bilateral agreement between the two governments). Furthermore, during 1992 to 2007 Slovak citizenship was given only to 199 applicants. A population decline, which shook dramatically a network of basic schools in the 1990s and secondary schools in the 2000s, has a negative influence also on labour market prospects. There were 22.1 live births per 1 000 inhabitants in 1960, decreasing gradually to 19.1, 15.1 and 10.2 in 1980, 1990 and 2000, respectively.

Table 6
History and prognosis of demographic development by selected age groups

| Year | 6 years old | Index 89 | 6-14 aged | Index 89 | 15-18 aged | Index 89 |
|------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
| 1989 | 89 545 | 1.00 | 840 987 | 1.00 | 347 027 | 1.00 |
| 1990 | 88 518 | 0.99 | 835 294 | 0.99 | 370 100 | 1.07 |
| 2000 | 65 552 | 0.73 | 690 166 | 0.82 | 353 999 | 1.02 |
| 2002 | 59 961 | 0.67 | 649 860 | 0.77 | 345 741 | 1.00 |
| 2004 | 56 400 | 0.63 | 603 292 | 0.72 | 329 314 | 0.95 |
| 2006 | 53 939 | 0.60 | 556 847 | 0.66 | 317 086 | 0.91 |
| 2007 | 50 839 | 0.57 | 533 925 | 0.63 | 308 980 | 0.89 |
| 2008 | 50 487 | 0.56 | 512 229 | 0.61 | 302 234 | 0.87 |
| 2018 | 58 083 | 0.65 | 499 818 | 0.59 | 207 630 | 0.60 |
| 2025 | 56 448 | 0.63 | 522 711 | 0.62 | 224 004 | 0.65 |

Source: Statistical office (2007 demographic prognosis) recalculated by Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education and adjusted by authors

How this demographic decline should affect respective type of schools is outlined in the following table.

Table 7
Number of newly enrolled and graduates by type of schools (since 2007 forecasting*)

| Year | Basic schools 9 years programme | | | Secondary specialised schools | | Secondary vocational schools | | Grammar schools | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Newly enrolled | Graduates 9 th class | Leaving BS | Newly enrolled | Graduates | Newly enrolled | Graduates | Newly enrolled | | Graduates | |
| | | | | | | | | 4, 5- years lasting programme | in 8- years lasting programme | 4, 5- years lasting programme | 8- years lasting programme |
| 1989 | 88 093 | 85 763 | 89 201 | 22 052 | 18 747 | 51 807 | 42 898 | 14 017 | - | 10 463 | - |
| 2006 | 53 074 | 63 697 | 72 387 | 28 450 | 26 077 | 35 564 | 31 928 | 15 262 | 5 015 | 14 014 | 5 449 |
| 2007 | 49 849 | 59 782 | 67 791 | 26 343 | 24 759 | 34 534 | 31 083 | 14 348 | 4 981 | 13 243 | 5 652 |
| 2012 | 52 618 | 45 640 | 51 755 | 20 111 | 22 390 | 26 365 | 25 334 | 10 954 | 4 438 | 13 689 | 4 776 |
| 2017 | 56 138 | 40 604 | 46 044 | 17 892 | 17 080 | 23 456 | 20 359 | 9 745 | 4 775 | 10 443 | 4 422 |
| 2018 | 56 952 | 41 176 | 46 692 | 18 144 | 16 823 | 23 786 | 20 052 | 9 882 | 4 856 | 10 286 | 4 354 |
| 2025 | 55 349 | 45 746 | 51 875 | 20 158 | 16 474 | 26 426 | 20 110 | 10 979 | 5 189 | 10 072 | 4 377 |

* calculated by Jan Herich, Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education based on 2007 Statistical Office (INFOSTAT) demographic prognosis; adjusted by authors

According to these prognoses a decrease of students in VET schools is expected till 2018, followed by slight improvement till 2025 as demonstrated on enrolment numbers. Of course, the governmental interventions already announced and partly introduced by 2008 Education Act might reverse the indicated trend and reduce enrolment into grammar schools.

Serious weak points of policies must be however again mentioned – regardless the population decline, a mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market is substantially caused by

- a long period of weak cooperation of education, employment services and employers in programming and evaluating VET;
- a long period of VET under-financing and VET ill-financing model;
- attracting foreign investors needing predominantly ISCED 3C labour force.

1.2.1. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21

The strategy has been developed by the Ministry of Finance and the Government Office and was adopted by the government on 4th June 2008.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The Criticism of European Commission within its reaction to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy and with regard to the Convergence Programme makes it necessary to reflect current weaknesses, which are seen by the EC predominantly in pending modernisation of the education system, insufficient progress in research and development, steadily high long-term unemployment, and little progress in improving pro-business environment. The government has promised to address these weaknesses when applying for joining eurozone. This policy should decrease the risks embedded in country membership in the eurozone.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The policy is aimed at identification of priorities of country development within post-euro adoption era. There are four priority areas

- research, development and innovation (4 short-term, 4 medium-term measures);
- education (8 short-term, 14 medium-term measures);
- employment (2 short-term, 7 medium-term measures);
- improving the quality of business environment, better governance and higher transparency (4 short-term, 10 medium-term measures).

Crucial short-term measures identified with an impact on VET are as follows:

- accreditation of non-formal programmes and validation of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- improving reading, mathematical and scientific literacy in the light of unsatisfactory performance within PISA 2006; redesigning curricula should contribute to improving results and reducing influence of socio-economic background on student performance – both is highly relevant for secondary VET schools.

Crucial medium-term measures identified with an impact on VET are as follows:

- improving ICT application in education, adjusting pedagogies and learning materials to ICT
- implementing a new model of continuing professional development of pedagogical staff;
- diversification of tertiary education into universities, schools of higher education and schools of vocational higher education;
- supporting development of post-secondary non-tertiary and short track tertiary

ISCED 5B studies focusing on labour market needs and strengthening assertion of graduate on the labour market;

- improving the quality of education in line with performance based financing schools;
- developing a system of lifelong guidance;
- improving entrepreneurial skills of secondary school graduates, and their knowledge on businesses;
- development of the national flexicurity system encompassing four components of flexicurity and flexicurity eight principles, as suggested by the European Commission;
- improving employability by better aligning education with labour market, as a consequence of detailed labour market intelligence, in particular anticipation of skill needs, and involvement of employers to support non-formal learning of employees;
- improving institutional background for increased coherence in policies based on agreement of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, the Union of Slovak Towns and Municipalities, representatives of employers and representatives of employees.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Primary target group are decision makers:
Central, regional and local authorities

- Status of implementation

The strategy paper was adopted by the government on 4th June 2008. Subsequent action plans should be submitted to the government a month later. Short-term measures should be implemented and/or translated into legislation by the end of 2008.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is representing the utmost possible overarching approach addressing socio-economic development of the country. Action plans will be embedded into the National Reform Programme to be submitted to the European Commission in October 2008.

- Key actors involved

Leading actors are the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Government; five sectoral ministries are involved in elaboration and implementation of respective measures.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies);

It is not yet possible to assess an impact of the policy as only some of the measures are in the process of implementation and a dominant part of measures is in pre-launching phase.

- Indicators of success

Indicators of success of two aforementioned VET relevant short-term measures are as follows:

- legislative background for accreditation of non-formal programmes and validation of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning created, that is followed by adoption of act on VET and act on lifelong learning and subsequent establishment of accreditation and validation systems;
- corrective measures to address weaknesses by PISA identified (these measures are going to be based on a study to be elaborated in cooperation of the National Institute for Education and Comenius University analysing reasons of low performance of students in PISA and proposing measures to improve the quality of education/learning);
 - corrective measures are translated into respective actions resulting in improvement in PISA in future.

Indicators of success of medium-term policies will be identified within aforementioned action plans, which should be submitted to the government in July 2008.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

As all measures are planned within the governmental policy, which will be embedded in the National Reform Programme (October 2008), coherence and integrative approach is expected. An overarching approach of this policy is envisaged and considered a dominant reason of its development and implementation.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

It is not yet possible to comment on obstacles as the policy is in its pre-launching phase. Some obstacles however could be foreseen:

- It is declared that no increase of public expenditure is envisaged, and therefore priorities in funding must be managed within limits of sectoral budgets and cost saving measures in other (non-prioritised) public policies might create reluctance of affected players;
- Although ESF and other European funds offer an opportunity to cover priorities of this policy significantly, current experience with ESF indicates vulnerability
 - as quality managers might be discouraged by recent administrative burden unless some corrections are agreed (e.g. flat rate overheads);
 - unless progress monitoring and final evaluation of projects are substantially improved in order to prevent from superficial fulfilment of projects' objectives.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

It is not yet possible to comment on future complementary and/or corrective measures.

2. Improving access to and equity in VET

2.1. National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET

Systematic VET, which follows some elements of VET within 9-year basic school, starts with the education offered from the network of study branches (ISCED 3A) and training branches (ISCED 3C). Secondary specialised schools (SSS) are focused primarily on ISCED 3A education and very marginally provide education at ISCED 3C level. Secondary vocational schools (SVS) offered primarily education at ISCED 3C level and gradually more and more also education at ISCED 3A level. SSS and SVS represented two basic kinds of schools offering initial VET. Gradually, and predominantly due to administrative reasons, the so-called associated and joined schools emerged, both in legislation and statistics.

To illustrate a variety of the offer in VET, the data on educational programmes will be presented here. As of March 2008 the following numbers of specialisations and sub-specialisations were enlisted in the registry maintained by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education. With regard to secondary vocational schools there were 21 specialisations and sub-specialisations at ISCED 2C level, 312 at ISCED 3C level, 234 at ISCED 3A level and 8 of the so-called gradual training, which can lead to ISCED 3C as well as ISCED 3A level, following the student's interest and achievements. With regard to secondary specialised schools there were 12 specialisations and sub-specialisations at ISCED 3C level, 432 at ISCED 3A, 4 level and 88 at ISCED 5B level. It depends on schools and school establishers what types of educational programmes will be offered to basic schools leavers. And it depends on their cooperation with regional partners, whether the offer of educational programmes will meet labour market needs.

VET system and parity of esteem with general education

Initial VET is dominant in the educational system in Slovakia in the structure of educational programmes as well as in numbers of inhabitants attending IVET programmes.

In 1989 a share of students admitted to grammar schools represented just 16% of all students admitted to secondary schools, and a VET stream represented 84% of newly enrolled.

Table 8

Number of newly enrolled students to secondary schools

| Year | VET - SVS | | VET - SSS | | Grammar | | Total | |
|------------------|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|-----|
| | Newly enrolled | % |
| 1989 | 51 807 | 59 | 22 052 | 25 | 14 017 | 16 | 87 876 | 100 |
| 2002 | 37 311 | 42 | 30 318 | 34 | 20 482 | 23 | 88 111 | 100 |
| 2006 | 35 564 | 42 | 28 450 | 34 | 20 505 | 24 | 84 519 | 100 |
| Difference 06-89 | -16 243 | - | + 6 398 | - | + 6 488 | - | - 3 356 | - |

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

*2002 newly enrolled 4-5-year G 14 477, 5th grade of 8-year G 5 945, 3rd grade of 6-year G 60 Total 20 482

**2006 newly enrolled 4-5-year G 15 262, 5th grade of 8-year G 5 178, 3rd grade of 6-year G 65 Total 20 505

Although the stream of students admitted to VET study and training branches has gradually weakened (as visible from the table above), Slovakia belongs to EU countries with the strongest VET stream (in share of secondary students). Nevertheless, the attractiveness of VET has undoubtedly decreased and interest in general education increased. In contrast to other countries polarity between ISCED 3A (regardless whether VET or general) and ISCED 3C rather than polarity between general and vocational education is significant.

In the 2006/2007 school year there were 40 119 graduates of full-time VET programmes at ISCED 3A level and 15 393 graduates at ISCED 3C. Additionally there were also 1 665

students achieving post-secondary non-tertiary education at ISCED 4 a 5B levels. Thus, the share of students graduated from ISCED 3C programmes was only 26.9%.

As visible, VET in Slovakia offers quite a lot of possibilities for achieving secondary education, which entitle students for entry to higher education. Over 70% of VET graduates would have been entitled to apply for higher education and ISCED 3C graduates could have received this entitlement if they had continued in two-year follow-up study offered by schools to ISCED 3C graduates. Additionally, in the 2006/2007 school year there were 2 028 students at ISCED 3A level (of which 844 at SVS), 1 202 at ISCED 3C level and 1 547 at ISCED 4 and 5B levels, graduating from other than full-time studies.

Access to VET is not a primary problem in Slovakia. Even, the VET system is dominantly set for the educational market services, and it aims to meet students' and their parents' interests. Schools respond to labour market demand only secondarily. It is a paradox and a fault of the education system in Slovakia that schools rationalise their behaviour in this, as they are stimulated by financial tools, in particular after implementation of funding based on per capita, to attract pupils to enter offered studies, and not stimulated to meet interests of companies in labour force.

Access problems and promotion of the social inclusion

Slovakia features a high share of graduates at ISCED 3 level. With 91.3% it belonged to top EU countries (Eurostat, 2007) and it is highly exceeding the respective EU benchmark. Despite this, there is a significant group in Slovakia for which low education attainment brings problems in assertion on the labour market. For members of Roma minority living in social exclusion, especially in segregated settlements, VET, in particular at ISCED 2C and ISCED 3C as well as VET acquired within other than formal education, could become a way to higher living standard. This will however require changes in provision of VET as well as in social policy (see policy example No. 6 in 2.3.2.).

The second most significant vulnerable group are adults over 50 years (see policy example No. 4 in 2.3.2.). The reason of their low employment and high unemployment stems from the insufficient offer of appropriate jobs for this age group, as well as insufficient access to education focused on labour market demand and at the same time corresponding to specificities of learning styles of these people. Moreover inhabitants, regardless the age, believe that older people are simply not employable anymore. According to 2007 Eurobarometer on discrimination in the EU Slovakia has scored 2nd after Portugal with 73% of respondents agreeing with the view that people over 50 in their country are often considered as being no longer capable of working efficiently. At the same time in Denmark only 37% of respondents agreed to this opinion.

2.2. Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET

2.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

After 2002 it has been apparent that the worst period of transformation economy was over and the country has entered a period of steep economic growth supported by structural reforms, accelerating after accession into EU. Although the unemployment was still high, the period of instability of the 1990s, when it was not possible to anticipate demand for labour and an inflow and structure of investments into individual regions, has been overcome. Nevertheless, in particular due to strong focus on fiscal consolidation, the interest in human capital development remained just on the level of political declarations. The most important reform with an impact on secondary VET was the so-called decentralisation and modernisation of public administration (see example of policy in 6.2.2.) and a reform of financing regional education (see example of policy in 6.3.2.) Government did not manage to start the fundamental educational reform, which was in particular urgent with regard to VET.

Acute lack of graduates of blue-collar professions is also a consequence of governmental support to vast foreign direct investments into assembling industry in mechanical engineering and electronics after 2002. The investment plans were carried out without an early signal towards regional school system and without any solid attempt to influence the choice of study of basic school graduates. Key companies in automotive industry (VW, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Kia and their subcontractors) and electronics (Samsung, Sony) need most the labour force on ISCED 3C level. Nevertheless, it was exactly this VET stream, that has become weak after 1989 development and it is very much disputable, whether it will be possible to retrieve the VET segments in question without increasing the price of labour in respective professions.

The employment in industry increased from 615 200 in 2000 to 690 900 employed in 2007. The most significant increase from 285 200 in 2000 to 359 300 in 2007 is in the ISCO-88 category "plant and machine operators". The steep increase has been also seen in construction from 167 700 employees in 2000 to 237 100 employees in 2007; (all data according to LFS, Statistical Office of the SR).

A disproportion between demand and supply on the labour market, that turned critical after Slovakia has joined the EU (185 700 workers from Slovakia abroad in 2007 compared to 119 000 in 2004 and 84 900 in 2002, according to the Statistical Office, LFS) is not solely a consequence of deformations in focus of the schools when supplying VET.

Therefore no short-term policy within education sector is able to change behaviour of pupils and parents in choosing schools and professions and contribute to increasing enrolment to ISCED 3C programmes and attractiveness of this segment of VET.

As the demand for school graduates is increasing, there are companies that are insuring their future labour force by contracting pupils and/or providing the pupils with scholarships. Labour Code amendment §53 is assisting in this effort, as it allows contracting 15 years old pupils even before the pupil has completed his/her studies. After completing studies he/she will remain working for the employer for an agreed period of time (maximum three years).

Cash-rich companies as well as rapidly growing sectors are solving the labour force problem by own investments to VET. Automotive industry has even conducted its own reform (see No Longer Waiting for Godot. In: Cedefop Info 3/2003), that became a model for other sectors facing a need to intervene the sectoral VET by a reform (see e.g. example of policy from the Bratislava Self-Governing Region in 5.2.2.). Companies without sufficient funds as well as weaker sectors are in favour of regulations as for admission to schools and to secondary grammar schools above all. These regulations would not provide for a sustainable effect and it is only to hope, that such requirements are not going to become part of the newly designed act on VET.

The newly designed Act on LLL should eliminate lagging behind of Slovakia in two important areas – career counselling and recognition of both non-formal and informal education, as these may significantly influence attitude of the citizens and to accommodate their preferences towards the labour market better than regulations in admission to schools.

It has to be concluded, taking into account the high number of students in IVET, that

- when speaking about measures aimed at increasing attractiveness of VET in order to harmonise demand and supply in domestic labour markets, it is necessary to discuss reasons of escaping from sectors and professions (as well as labour force in general to EU countries) - domestic non-competitive wages being one of main reasons;
- when speaking about measures aimed at improving access to VET, it is necessary to discuss
 - obstacles hampering Roma to gain qualification;
 - reasons of insufficient capacity of a targeted offer capable to attract adult population, so it would invest the time and maybe also financial sources in CVET/LLL (there was only 3.9% in LLL in 2007, according to Eurostat); increase in CVET/LLL is inevitable when thinking about further increase of labour market flexibility and applying flexicurity principle.

2.2.2. Example of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Lifelong guidance and counselling

The policy is part of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007 and a subsequent action plan for strategy implementation adopted by the Ministry of Education on 13th November 2007.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The policy resulted from the need to create the system of lifelong guidance and counselling as a supplement to the open system of lifelong learning to be created based on the adopted strategy to respond to the real needs of individuals, employers, public administration and educational institutions to facilitate access to education, acquisition of new qualifications and employment during the whole life.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main aim of the strategy is to create a system of lifelong guidance and counselling to enhance access to acquisition of new qualifications through the quality learning within formal, non-formal and informal settings. The policy should result in maintaining the highest possible employment for individuals and to increasing the participation of adult population in lifelong learning to 15% (in 2007 it was only 3.9%, according to Eurostat).

The following concrete objectives focused on guidance and counselling were explicitly set within the action plan:

- Development of single information database for lifelong learning;
- Widening the scope and improving the quality of training for lifelong learning counsellors;
- Setting up the institution responsible for coordination and methodological guidance of the system of lifelong guidance and counselling.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Based on the objectives set in the action plan the following target groups were identified:

- counsellors, individuals, employers, social partners, public administration within development of a single information database for lifelong learning;
- counsellors, pedagogues, staff of state administration in education within widening the scope and improving the quality of training for lifelong learning counsellors;
- counsellors, the Ministry of Education within setting up an institution responsible for coordination and methodological guidance of the system of lifelong guidance and counselling.

- Status of implementation

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance and was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007. The action plan for its implementation was approved by the Ministry of Education on 13th November 2007. The policy should be reflected in the new act on lifelong learning, which is under preparation.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy will be implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The strategy is considered an instrument in the development of knowledge society, which was prioritised within the Manifesto of the Government from 2006. Elaboration of the strategy is included among Slovakia's commitments within in the National Reform Programme and it is also reflected in the National Strategic Reference Framework for the 2007-2013. Characteristics of lifelong guidance and counselling complies with the objectives defined in the Lisbon strategy, in particular in the Resolution of the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe adopted in May 2004 and a Handbook for Policy Makers in Career Guidance.

Creating a system of lifelong learning is listed among measures introduced in the latest strategy paper of the government Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 approved on 4th June 2008 within the priority area Education.

- Key actors involved

Key actors comprise the Ministry of Education and public and state administration authorities. Furthermore, it was proposed to set up an institution responsible for coordination and methodological guidance in lifelong learning.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The policy is in a pre-launch phase and therefore no assessment has been conducted. The policy should contribute to increasing the number of adults in lifelong learning, in particular within non-formal and informal settings leading to acquiring (partial) qualification. Consequently, the policy should result in increased qualification level of labour force and higher employment.

- Indicators of success

After adoption of the Act on lifelong learning and implementation of the action plan:

- with regard to a single information database for lifelong learning
 - database developed;
 - number of users;
- with regard to training for lifelong learning counsellors
 - number of trainees;
 - quality of handbooks and methodological guides elaborated;
- with regard to institutionalisation of coordination and methodological supporting to create the system of lifelong guidance
 - coordinating institution set up;
 - network of regional counselling centres fully established;
 - counsellors quality standards developed;
- participation of adult population in LLL increased up to 15%.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Lifelong guidance must be developed in line with regional and sectoral policies resulting from respective development plans. Current practice of regions indicates that regional authorities work on this issue. After implementation of the act on lifelong learning it will be possible to assess whether recent experience from lifelong guidance was reflected by law makers. Undoubtedly, this policy belongs to overarching elements contributing to coherence of education and employment policies.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Policy has not been implemented yet. On the other hand it must be understood in relation with many already existing bottom-up activities.

There is a number of sectoral and local activities initiated when lack of information is a barrier of economic development. Along with initiatives financed by companies involved, there are many ESF projects aimed at lifelong guidance carried out within SOP Human Resources, e.g. Support of career counselling in mechanical engineering that was conducted in 2006-2007 by NGO Mládež bez hraníc (Youth without Borders). This project, via combination of information materials (brochure, website and promotion video) has drawn attention of basic school students, their parents and teachers to the perspectives, that studying mechanical engineering can offer. A very successful and inventive portal <http://www.bezhranic.sk/>, has answered the question, why to study mechanical engineering and provided up to date information on schools, which were offering mechanical engineering as a study branch, together with information on employment of graduates of these schools on the labour market. Similarly to any other project results, this portal depends on the fact whether or not it will find institutional support to guarantee its upgrading and long-term sustainability. This is the most serious obstacle anticipated and needing overcoming even after implementation of the new legislation.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

The most important issue in the future, in terms of quality of counselling is, whether there will be a stabile and up to date information sources for the counsellors and whether there will be support structures for dissemination information using existing initiatives and counselling structures. It is important, that the legislation, now in preparation phase, will use experience of European networks, Euroguidance and European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network above all.

A National Lifelong Guidance Policy Forum may become an important player in the future. A material on establishing this Forum has been already completed and it is in the pipeline to be submitted to the session of the government.

2.3. Improving equity for specific target groups

2.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Slovakia is among EU best performing countries in share of ISCED 3 graduates among young people (91.3% in 2007, Eurostat) and in early school leavers (7.2% in 2007, Eurostat); safely fulfilling both respective EU benchmarks (85%, 10%) for the long time. Education system and practice of pedagogues is traditionally driven by effort to keep students staying at

schools and prevent them from “hanging around”; school directors prefer transfer of students to other school offering them a second chance rather than letting them just drop out. There is however a serious problem with young Roma. Only 19.9% of Roma aged 20-24 years have been identified with at least ISCED 3C level of education compared to 89.4 % among all young inhabitants in 2001 Census.

Although there are many groups at risk in Slovakia, ethnic Roma minority, and in particular ethnic Roma living in segregation, are hardest to target group at risk (see policy example 6 in section 2.3.2.), over-represented among low educated, low skilled, long-term unemployed and socially challenged. It is not possible to address Roma as an ethnic group with specific policies, although specificity of their cultural heritage and from this resulting life style patterns are recognised, as it is forbidden to collect data based on ethnicity and as policies targeted at ethnic Roma might have been considered discriminatory. Therefore, measures targeted at socially challenged are usually set within education sector to improve their educational performance.

The most efficient instrument so far to keep young people from socially challenged environment in school is scholarship programme (see policy example 5 in section 2.3.2.), which is however educational performance tested and does not open the window of opportunity for extremely disadvantaged learners. Many of Roma belong to them due to not stimulating background in family and diverse handicaps in the start of schooling; i.a. limited knowledge of language of instruction.

Number of registered employed increased by 10.8% from 2 127 000 in 2002 up to 2 357 300 in 2007. When decomposing employment growth into age groups, we can observe moderate decrease in the age group 15-24 (2007/2002 index 0.952), moderate increase in age group 25-49 (105.4) and a significant increase in age group 50-64 (142.8). When decomposing employment growth according to education level, we can see indications of difficulties for ISCED 3C and lower levels.

Table 9
Employed by level of education in selected years

| Level of education | 2000 | 2002 | 2007 | Index 2007/2000 | Index 2007/2002 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|
| ISCED 2 | 146.1 | 119.1 | 105.9 | 0.72 | 0.89 |
| ISCED 3C | 737.5 | 775.5 | 756.6 | 1.03 | 0.98 |
| ISCED 3C - SSS | 86.9 | 50.0 | 61.3 | 0.71 | 1.23 |
| ISCED 3A - SVS | 97.2 | 105.1 | 123.7 | 1.27 | 1.18 |
| ISCED 3A - G | 113.0 | 93.0 | 101.7 | 0.90 | 1.09 |
| ISCED 3A - SSS | 661.9 | 701.0 | 822.3 | 1.24 | 1.17 |
| ISCED 5B | 15.0 | 14.1 | 18.4 | 1.23 | 1.30 |
| ISCED 5B | 6.9 | 7.0 | 20.2 | 2.93 | 2.89 |
| ISCED 5A | 233.1 | 259.1 | 341.8 | 1.47 | 1.32 |
| ISCED 6 | 4.0 | 3.0 | 5.6 | 1.40 | 1.87 |
| Without education | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.00 | 0.05 |

Source: Statistical Office, LFS

Nevertheless, disadvantaged job seekers were identified by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services as follows:

- a) “graduates” (aged below 25, with completed education less than two years ago);
- b) “old” (aged 50+);
- c) “long-term unemployed” (a registered job seeker for at least 12 months in the last 16 months);
- d) people unable to harmonise duties at work with parental obligations;
- e) parents with three or more children, or a lone citizen caring of a child;
- f) people unable to carry out current employment for health reasons;
- g) people moving within EU to find a job;

- h) disabled;
- i) people granted asylum.

Aforementioned disadvantaged groups were explicitly stated as target of public employment service, substantially co-funded by the European Social Fund since 2004, within projects of the 2004-2006 Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources. Since 1st May 2008, with amendment of this law coming in force, six additional categories of disadvantaged groups were identified, among which early school leavers must be mentioned.

Respective active labour market policies (ALMP) will be again co-funded by 2007-2013 ESF projects. Two of ALMP tools are VET related:

- graduates practice; and
- retraining.

Increasing job creation as well as opening opportunities within EU countries resulted also in a decrease of registered unemployment of school graduates.

Table 10

Registered unemployed graduates by level of education in selected years

| | 2000 | 2002 | 2007 | 2007/2002 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Tertiary | 2 113 | 4 545 | 1 273 | 0.28 |
| SSS | 11 860 | 11 641 | 4 304 | 0.37 |
| Grammar | 2 742 | 1 949 | 884 | 0.45 |
| SVS - ISCED 3A | 6 048 | 10 361 | 3 556 | 0.34 |
| SVS - ISCED 3C | 8 497 | 8 718 | 3 174 | 0.36 |
| Together | 31 206 | 37 214 | 13 191 | 0.35 |

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Nevertheless graduates are addressed by a specific policy measure (see policy example within section 5.3.2.). Although retraining is considered a standard tool in overcoming unemployment (see Priority 8 in table within section 1.1.) results are not persuasive. Plastic illustration stems from the segment of long-term unemployed.

A high share of long-term unemployed in 2007 (121 764 Slovak citizens unemployed for more than a year (50.7%) and one in four unemployed more than 4 years) is indicating, that the current active policy tools have little effect on the hard core of unemployed. Moreover, neither further training is a way towards a solution, as only 103 out of 1 403 those trained in September and 214 out of 591 trained in December 2007 came from the category of unemployed more than 4 years. Similarly only 158 out of 1 403 trained in September and 66 out of 591 trained in December 2007 came from the category with low education (ISCED 2 and less) according to Centre data.

When disregarding the Roma minority, numbers of young drop-outs, low-skilled and in fact even socially disadvantaged are not significant, and similarly to migrants whose number is even extremely low, respective policies are of lesser urgency compared to women returners (see policy example 1 in section 2.3.2.), older workers (see policy example 4 in section 2.3.2.), and disabled (see policy examples 2 and 3 in section 2.3.2.).

Adults above 50 are a very important group among them, mainly if it comes to people that have lost jobs but did not loose work habits.

Adults above 50 have represented, according to unemployment register in December 2007, 56 836 (23.7%) out of 239 939 all disposable unemployed. Their reintegration to the labour market is more difficult because of a few reasons, but it resides also in a little pressure to change opinions of the Slovak population, both employers and employees, as for their performance and employment, at the same time. On the other hand, there are people with low level of education: 77.4 % unemployed 50+, registered with the job centres, have education on ISCED 3C level and lower.

An important instrument to enforce equal opportunities is Antidiscrimination Act No. 365/2004 Coll. Despite the Constitutional Court decided in October 2004 its §8 - on positive discrimination, being anticonstitutional, mainly due to a clumsy diction of this paragraph, an amendment in 2008 and a new wording, allow for implementing temporary measures to provide for equal opportunities.

It is too soon to assess this instrument, however it is hoped that it will help reduce discrimination of traditionally affected groups, in particular women returners. Education of women on the maternity leave is currently intensively supported by ESF, while language and ICT courses are considered the most successful activity in assistance to reintegrate them into labour market.

2.3.2. Examples of policy measures

Example 1

A. Title of policy measure

Facilitating reintegration into the labour market by improved access to education and training to persons with family duties through provision of financial contribution for services to families with children

The measure was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, being in force since 1st February 2004.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The employment rate for women in Slovakia in 2007 was 53.0%, which is 5.3 percentage points less compared to the EU27 average (58.3%). In order to achieve the Lisbon strategy objective to increase the employment rate for women up to 60% it is necessary to create the environment that would increase employment of persons (women/parents) with family duties. According to 4Q 2007 LFS data there were 64.2 thousand women at the maternity leave, which represents 5.5% of economically inactive women in Slovakia. Measures to harmonise working and family life can significantly influence the increase in female employment.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

In order to facilitate women's/parents' return to the labour market, the measure was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, coming into force since 1st February 2004, to facilitate the access of women/parents (jobseekers and people interested in employment) to further training and to stimulate their participation in education and training for the labour market programmes.

Women/parents taking care of a child before entering compulsory education (up to 6 years of age) and participating in education and training for the labour market courses organised by public employment services are provided with a financial contribution. The contribution is serving the purpose to cover a part of expenses linked to the care for a child in pre-school establishments or the care provided by a private person during education and training for the labour market.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Women/parents (job applicants and people interested in employment) taking care of a child before entering compulsory education.

- Status of implementation

The measure has been implemented since 2004 with coming into force of the new employment act.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The measure was introduced nation-wide. Job applicants and persons interested in employment have to submit a written application for provision of contribution to the office of labour, social affairs and the family. The contributions are provided during education and training for the labour market only. The total amount of contribution depends on the number of children in pre-school age. The contribution is SKK 1 300 (approx. EUR 43) for one child and SKK 1 000 (approx. EUR 33) for any other child.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The contribution accompanies the employment policy measure focused on increasing employment of disadvantaged groups at the labour market and the social policy focused on support of social inclusion.

- Key actors involved

- Offices of labour, social affairs and family

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The measure was aimed at elimination of barriers to participation of women/parents taking care of pre-school age children at education and training for the labour market programmes, and thus enhancing their chances at the labour market. At the same time, the measure was intended to create conditions for applying the principle of equal opportunities in the access of disadvantaged groups to the labour market. Following this, not quantitative data but rather a qualitative aspect (improved access) is considered relevant.

- Indicators of success

Indicators of success were not explicitly set however improvement of statistical data in employment of targeted group will be taken into account when evaluating a policy.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Experience from the policy will be reflected within other active labour market policies.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Originally, the contribution for services to families with children was targeted to jobseekers only, which resulted in different approach towards jobseekers and persons interested in employment. In order to eliminate these differences in access to education and training for the labour market the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll., coming into force since 1st January 2006, introduced the provision of similar benefits also to persons interested in employment.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

As the instrument is financed from the ESF the documentation of eligible expenditures is administratively difficult. Problems also occur regarding contribution entitlement in case jobseekers and persons interested in employment do not complete the education and training programme.

Example 2

A. Title of policy measure

People with disabilities: Financing a work assistant

The measure was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, in force since 1st February 2004.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Increasing employment of people with disabilities and improving their employability are listed by the government among the priorities within Lisbon employment strategy. The current situation of people with disabilities on the labour market is characterised by their higher share among the unemployed compared to the share among the employed. According to the 4Q 2007 LFS data, a share of employed people with disabilities in the total employed was 1.1%, while their share in the total unemployed was 3%. A wide range of instruments within the active labour market measures have been applied to improve the access to the labour market and increase the employability of people with disabilities, such as sheltered workshops and sheltered workplaces, contribution for employing a disadvantaged job seeker and contribution for operating or performing self-employment to disabled persons. Besides these instruments focused on direct job creation for people with disabilities, there are instruments within the active labour market measures applied to support their employment and maintaining their jobs.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

A contribution for activities of a work assistant belongs to instruments of active labour market policy measures. The instrument is aimed at creating favourable conditions for performing jobs for employees or self-employed with disabilities dependent on help of other people in performing their jobs. A work assistant should help people with disabilities to perform their daily work activities at an employer's workplace.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

People with disabilities

- Status of implementation

The contribution for activities of a work assistant was introduced by the Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services coming in force since 1st February 2004.

The office of labour, social affairs and family provides financial contribution to the employer for a work assistant, who should spend working hours exclusively assisting employee(s) upon performing work during their employment, or to a person with disabilities, who is self-employed during performance of activities. The contribution is provided monthly up to 90% of the total price of work per one assistant.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The contribution is provided nation-wide in the same amount.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

Provision of the contribution is part of the employment policy, which is in terms of achieving Lisbon objectives aimed at increasing the employment of disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

- Key actors involved

- Office of labour, social affairs and family;
- Employers.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The contribution is a supporting supplementary instrument focused on increasing employment of persons with disabilities. Its implementation was aimed at creating favourable conditions for work inclusion of persons with disabilities, in particular those needing help in performing employment. As a work assistant can serve several employees at the same time, both a number of work assistance jobs and a number of served persons are taken into account when evaluating the impact.

- Indicators of success

Increasing numbers in statistics, as visible below:

Table 11

Work assistance in 2004-2007

| Year | Number of work assistants | Number of persons with disabilities served by work assistants |
|------|---------------------------|---|
| 2004 | 18 | 52 |
| 2005 | 58 | 262 |
| 2006 | 60 | 283 |

Source: Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Results concerning inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market and maintaining their jobs achieved due to this instrument contribute to social integration as well. Thus, they can be considered part of social inclusion policy.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

The introduction of the instrument in 2004 was accompanied by a low level of its utilisation by employers and self-employed persons with disabilities. The usage of the instrument has increased year by year. As mentioned above this instrument does not belong to measures that could be assessed through quantitative indicators, i.e. number of newly created jobs, but rather through its impact on a target group in terms of facilitating access to employment, performing employment and maintaining jobs.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

To make administration less difficult and to strengthen the discipline of employers and self-employed with disabilities in submitting documents needed for clearing of the contribution.

Example 3

A. Title of policy measure

People with disabilities: Provision of financial benefit during education and training for the labour market

The measure was introduced within amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, in force since 1st May 2008.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

As already indicated in example 2 above a share of employed people with disabilities in the total employed was 1.1%, while their share in the total unemployed was 3% according to the 4Q 2007 LFS data. Therefore a specific action to reduce this disproportion is needed.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The measure is aimed at increasing motivation of disabled jobseekers to participate in programmes of education and training for the labour market and the support for long-term education and training for the labour market.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Disabled jobseekers

- Status of implementation

The measure is a part of a new active labour market policy instrument implemented within the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services, coming in force since 1st May 2008. Disabled jobseekers participating in education and training for the labour market or in training lasting more than one month are entitled to a benefit. The title to benefit is decided and the benefit is provided by the office of labour, social affairs and family. The title to benefit will start at the training beginning and will expire at the training closing. The benefit is provided for a calendar month and equals to the subsistence minimum (SKK 5 130 as of 1st July 2007).

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The measure is implemented and benefits are provided in the same amount nationwide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The measure is part of employment policy focused on increasing employment and employability of disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

- Key actors involved

District offices of labour, social affairs and family

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The provision of a benefit is a new instrument of active labour market policy. An impact cannot be evaluated due to the short time of its implementation. The first evaluation report will be published by the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family at the beginning of 2009.

- Indicators of success

Indicators of success were not explicitly set however improvement of statistical data in employment of targeted group will be taken into account when evaluating a policy.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

It is expected that the provision of benefits will increase the motivation of disabled jobseekers for participation in programmes of education and training for the labour market. Results will contribute to increasing adaptability of people with disabilities to the changing labour market needs. Through this measure promoting lifelong learning, the government attempts to increase flexicurity.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

The measure is a new instrument of active labour market policy. The first evaluation of its implementation including obstacles encountered will be published by the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family at the beginning of 2009.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

It is not possible yet to comment on complementary and/or corrective measures.

Example 4

A. Title of policy measure

Contribution to employment of disadvantaged job seekers – with special focus on older worker

(Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on services in employment, §8(1)b identified people over 50 as disadvantaged group; one of together nine).

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Objective

Aim of this instrument is stimulation of the groups that have difficulties placing themselves on the labour market without active measures intervention.

- Target group

Compared with the previous legal state (Act No. 387/1996 Coll.) in the Act No. 5/2004 Coll., there is an extension of groups of disadvantaged job seekers (and later, in 2008 there is a new extension planned up to 15 categories). One of the disadvantaged groups, this instrument is intended for, are people over fifty.

- Status of implementation

Contribution to employment a disadvantaged job seeker has been provided to the employer for a created workplace since 2004.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

Nation-wide, with regional differences depending on the unemployment rate and a status of employer. The contribution is being provided on request of employer up to 24 months maximum; (minimum being SKK 41 923 for private employers in the Bratislava Region and maximum SKK 176 560 for public employer, including NGOs and church, in a district with the unemployment rate over the national average). There is a legal claim for the contribution, provided the disadvantaged job seeker is registered with the office 12 months at least. This contribution is being financed via state budget and ESF.

- Is it isolated policy?

Contribution for employment of disadvantaged job seekers is one of the instruments of active measures on the labour market targeted at creating new working positions. Nevertheless

- increase of future old age pension provided working is being prolonged without claiming old age pension;
- cumulation of benefits, receiving old age pension and earnings from employment;
- not paying levies (payroll transfers) when continuing working after meeting claim on old age pension or after recognition by authorities of the claim on early pension;
- prolonging the legal age limit for old age pension;

were additional measures that significantly contributed to employment increase of older workers.

- Key actors involved

- Employers creating job for disadvantaged job seekers;
- Labour offices operating in respective territory.

D. Assessment of the policy

- Assessment of impact

Since introduction of this instrument in 2004 till 31st December 2007, 1 218 disadvantaged job seekers became employed, out of these 224 disadvantaged job seekers due to age, 50+. This instrument facilitated re-entry to employment to 0.4% of 50+ old job seekers according to Centre of labour, social affaires and family.

- Indicators of success

Accessible data do not allow assessing length of continuation of created working place, especially for older job seekers and to evaluate the real success of this instrument as related to this target group.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

The measure is a standard active labour market policy instrument affecting different disadvantaged groups. Despite relatively low participation of older workers in this measure, the instrument is carrying out its mission and it is extending the chances of older people to return to the labour market.

Contribution to employment of people over 50 is part of wider policy - contribution to employment of disadvantaged groups identified by law. Therefore, outcomes of this policy are monitored together with other relevant policies.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome

A relatively low applicability of this instrument towards older citizens might have been influenced by a widely defined group of disadvantaged job seekers that was setting assumptions for employers to give priority to other than older labour force. Results of Institute for Labour and Family Research survey from April 2008 confirmed that employers, when deciding to accept a job seeker to a vacancy would prefer a younger

labour force (aged 30-49 in 61.5% and aged up to 29 in 27.3%) and only 3.8% would have preferred a job seeker at 50+, even provided there are the same conditions as for education, qualification and skills.

The respective instrument does not take into consideration specifications of older labour force and does not offer a possibility to organise work and time in a flexible way.

- What issues remain to be addressed

Amendment to the Act on Employment Services effective since 1st May 2008 has targeted the measures supporting disadvantaged groups of unemployed by introducing two new instruments. Both are extending reintegration chances of older workers to the labour market:

- "Contribution for training on the job of a disadvantaged job seeker" – it is creating space to test working skills of the disadvantaged job seeker before employment;
- "Contribution to support maintaining in employment employees with low wages" aimed at lowering barriers to higher employment of low skill workers which result from a relatively high tax wedge on low-skill workers making their employment unattractive.

The first instrument should address prejudices against employment of older workers in terms of doubts about their productivity; the second instrument should address the coincidence of elderness and low education, as 77.4% of unemployed over 50 are ISCED 3C and less educated.

A stimulation effect on employment of older workers is also expected from the amendment to Act No. 555/2007 Coll. on Social Insurance, effective since 1st January 2008 that will limit the claim on early retirement.

Example 5

A. Title of policy measure

Scholarships for secondary school students whose parents are in material need or below subsistence minimum

The policy was originally implemented within the national SOP Human Resources project "Provision of scholarships to secondary school students whose parents are dependent on benefits in material need" (1st June 2004 – 31st January 2006) aimed at students from all regions except the Bratislava Region. Scholarships for students from the Bratislava Region were paid from the state budget. After project's closing the policy continues with scholarships covered from the state budget for students from all regions.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Slovakia features a high unemployment of young people. At the beginning of the project a share of unemployed in the 19-29-age category was over 41%. The level of unemployment significantly correlates with the level of achieved education. The low level of education represents the main constraint in assertion on the labour market. The extremely high unemployment is in Roma minority. According to the data of the Statistical Office the unemployment rate of Roma oscillated at that time at the level 73% compared to total unemployment rate 14.3%. At the same time, the level of education among Roma is very low. The low access to education and employment of Roma results from a language barrier, cultural factors, low mobility, as well as from their social and economic situation. The low access to education threatens them with a

risk of social exclusion, which in turn leads to an increased unemployment. A similar situation is faced by families with more children or single parent families. The presented policy resulted from the efforts to improve access to education for pupils whose parents are in material need, and to increase their possibilities for assertion on the labour market.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main aim of the measure was to improve the access of targeted pupils to education. Specific objectives were as follows:

- Increasing a share of pupils from families in material need in education;
- Making pupils more involved in their education, in accordance with §2 of the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 311/2004 Coll. on Provision of Scholarships to Pupils of Secondary Schools and Special Schools;
- Increasing motivation of pupils from families in material need to participate at education.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Pupils whose parents depend on benefits in material need. In 2007 conditions were expanded to children from families living below a subsistence minimum, based on the amendment No. 343/2006 Coll. of the decree on provision of scholarships.

- Status of implementation

The ESF project was launched in June 2004 and closed in June 2006. Provision of benefits was conditioned by making a contract between a school and the assigned department of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, setting conditions for provision of financial means. The payments were made to respective schools through the Institute. The last benefits within the projects were paid for January 2006.

The scholarships covered meal, accommodation and travel expenses. The amount depended on student's educational achievements, which made students more involved in achieving better results.

Based on positive experience the implementation of the measure has been prolonged under the same conditions with scholarships paid from the state budget. Currently, scholarships are provided in accordance with the Decree No. 311/2004 Coll., as amended, and the Methodological Guideline of the Ministry of Education 14/2006-R of 6th June 2006.

The amount of benefit depends upon pupil's achievements. Pupils with the average mark 2.0 (of 5-mark scale with 1 the best and 5 the worse) receive the stipend of SKK 1 200, from 2.1 to 3.0 SKK 800, and over 3.0 SKK 600.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation;

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

The original project was implemented within the ESF SOP Human Resources, Priority 3 "Increasing the qualification and adaptability of employees and persons entering the labour market", Measure 3.1 Adaptation of vocational training and education to the

needs of the knowledge-based society. The aim of the project was in concord with the EQUAL initiative Priority Theme 1 “Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated and re-integrated into labour market” and its Measure 1 “Creating a system supporting the introduction of long-term unemployed, low-skilled and other disadvantaged groups into the labour market”. Moreover, the measure is also included within the National Reform Programme approved by the government on 12th October 2005, within the priority focused on access to education for children from risk and marginalised groups through inclusive policies in education and training “through programmes of financial support, such as contributions and subsidies for support of access to education”.

- Key actors involved

- Schools; they administer and approve applications for scholarships. They assess entitlement of pupils to receiving benefits, assign the amount of benefits as stipulated by the Ministry of Education decree, and submit lists of students, including amount of benefits to the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.
- The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education; it reviews requests for benefit payments submitted by schools, prepares supportive documents for contracts and contract supplements made with schools, provides schools with financial means, checks whether benefits were paid to pupils by schools correctly, provides methodological guidance to schools in specific cases of assessing entitlement for receiving benefits, and monitors the process of benefits provision.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The statistical data collected and processed by the respective department of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education has confirmed an increase in average amount of benefit from SKK 902 in 2004 to SKK 924 till March 2008. The lowest average benefit of almost SKK 846 was in secondary vocational schools, followed by SKK 893 at associated and joined schools, SKK 1 003 secondary specialised schools, and SKK 1 014 at grammar schools. Furthermore, a survey carried out on a sample of pupils receiving benefits shows improved performance of pupils. Significantly better arithmetical means from marks were observed. Students of VET schools represented 88.6% of students receiving benefits.

- Indicators of success

The indicators of success were set within the ESF project:

Final indicators:

- Number of pupils receiving scholarships: 12 258;
- Number of monthly benefits paid: 187 830;
- Number of pupils achieving better results in education after receiving scholarships: 2 328;
- Number of pupils receiving scholarships who complete secondary education: 3 107;
- Share of pupils achieving better results in education after receiving scholarships: 19%.

The total amount of eligible expenditures within the ESF project was SKK 86 047 173.05 (SKK 64 535 379.59 from ESF sources and SKK 21 511 793.46 from the state budget).

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Positive results led to expansion of the policy originally targeted on students whose parents depend on benefits in material need to students from families living below a subsistence minimum.

Furthermore, some regions started to provide for regional scholarships funded from their own budgets to refine targeting students, and to additionally increase benefits for some categories of students.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)
- Promotion of scholarships by regular means was found insufficient and therefore a specific action was taken. Calendars were disseminated to all secondary schools containing information how to take an action.
 - Some of regions and some of establishers of private schools intervened inappropriately insisting on transfer financial means to their budgets instead of transferring them directly to account of respective schools. The problem was fixed by the requirement of the Institute to submit school's individual bank account.
 - Administration of payment requests and financial statements were administratively very demanding; newly introduced mechanism is timesaving and schools are positive toward the change.
 - Unreliability of data from respective students caused additional administrative burden related to enforcement of paying back of unjustified benefits. This problem featuring predominantly in eastern and south-eastern Slovakia is hard to address, as it requires permanent means-testing.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

It is very demanding for schools to check whether a student is entitled to scholarship as regard their social status. It is necessary to find a way how to cooperate with official of social departments, which is conditioned by agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In such a way school would be responsible for checking entitlement related to quality of educational performance only.

Example 6

A. Title of policy measure

Increasing a level of education of ethnic Roma and preventing Roma living in settlements from social exclusion

The policy was originally based on the strategy paper "Concept of Education of Roma Children and Pupils" approved by the Ministry of Education Gremium on 19th April 2001, and incorporated into the national strategy paper the National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for Next 15-20 Years approved by the government on 19th December 2001, and subsequently approved by the parliament in 2002.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

According to the 2001 Census, 89 920 inhabitants of Slovakia declared themselves Roma. The table below indicates the extremely low education level (maximum ISCED 2) of young Roma, as about 80% of them have not been able to obtain qualification.

Table 12

All young inhabitants and young Roma* by level of education according to Census 2001

| | All inhabitants aged 20-24 | | Roma* aged 20-24 | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | Absolute number | % | Absolute number | % |
| ISCED 0-2 | 40 251 | 8.6 | 6 131 | 73.6 |
| ISCED 3C | 100 687 | 21.6 | 1 126 | 13.5 |
| ISCED 3C - SSS | 18 507 | 4.0 | 213 | 2.6 |
| ISCED 3A - SVS | 68 235 | 14.6 | 148 | 1.8 |
| ISCED 3A - SSS | 137 995 | 29.6 | 96 | 1.2 |
| ISCED3A - G | 67 641 | 14.5 | 59 | 0.7 |
| ISCED 5B | 2 296 | 0.5 | 4 | 0.0 |
| ISCED 5B | 5 350 | 1.1 | 9 | 0.1 |
| ISCED 5A | 16 097 | 3.5 | 6 | 0.1 |
| ISCED 6 | 218 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Without education | 1 504 | 0.3 | 190 | 2.3 |
| Unknown | 7 547 | 1.6 | 346 | 4.2 |
| Total | 466 328 | 100.0 | 8 328 | 100.0 |
| ISCED 3C - 6 | 417 026 | 89.4 | 1 661 | 19.9 |

Source: Statistical Office

*Those who declared themselves belonging to Roma nationality in 2001 Census,

SSS – secondary specialised schools, SVS – secondary vocational schools, G – grammar schools

However, according to demographic estimations, there were 379 200 ethnic Roma living in Slovakia in 2000, and according to a sociographic mapping from 2004, 40% of ethnic Roma lived in concentrated settlements with weak infrastructure, while 146 528 in settlements with inappropriate background for educating young people. No precise data is available about ethnic Roma, as collection of data based on ethnicity is considered violation of law (see also section 8.1.).

There are several reasons of the low level of education of Roma, two most indicated are as follows:

- Many of Roma were channelled into special schools due to their failure to pass school maturity tests designed for mainstream population, with no option to proceed in secondary education and to obtain VET qualification at least on ISCED 3C level;
- Roma parents are not always able to decide about the choice of schools that would be for the best interest for their children considering special schools appropriate for their children due to unimportant reasons (closer distance to their homes, less demanding education, attendance of other Roma children).

Although it is strictly forbidden to enrol children without mental handicap into special schools and the Ministry of Education permanently urged authorities to prevent from this, it was not easy to fix this problem, as many young Roma are lagging behind in school maturity tests due to non-stimulating environment in the family and/or lacking command of the language of instruction, which maturity tests were not sensitive enough to. Moreover, enrolment of such pupils is financially more attractive for special schools than for mainstream schools as financial contribution cannot compensate costs for adjustment of programme to learning needs of such pupil and therefore he/she might easily develop low-achiever syndrome in contrast with less demanding special school.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

- Improve a level of education of target group;
- Fully prevent from incorrect placement of target group children in special schools;
- Gradually achieve at least ISCED 3C level qualification for all.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

- Roma children and pupils;
- Socially challenged children and pupils (among which many ethnic Roma are included);
- Parents;
- School directors and educators;
- Local/Regional authorities.

- Status of implementation

The policy building on experience from many activities including PHARE projects in the 1990s and based on the aforementioned strategy papers has been permanently monitored and updated, as visible from the following documents submitted to the government:

- Current Situation in Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils, elaborated by the Ministry of Education in 2003;
- Concept of Integrated Education of Roma Children and Youth Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education, approved by the government on 26th May 2004;
- Current Situation in Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Youth, elaborated by the Ministry of Education in 2006;
- Concept of Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education, approved by the government on 2nd April 2008.

Furthermore, this policy was interrelated to other initiatives, e.g.

- Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015; the Slovak National Action Plan was elaborated responding to this initiative and of course including measures aimed at education;
- Medium-term Concept of the Development of Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic SOLIDARITY – INTEGRITY – INCLUSION 2008 – 2013, stressing importance in education and indicating priorities for future projects co-funded from EU funds in the 2007-2013 programming period (EUR 200 million is envisaged).

Of course, specific projects of 2004-2006 ESF SOP Human Resources were aimed at addressing education and training in concord with this policy as well. About EUR 365 million is earmarked to be allocated in the 2007-2013 programming period.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

Nation-wide with a special focus on Banská Bystrica Region, Prešov Region and Košice Region with a high share of inhabitants of Roma nationality (14.19%, 14.49% and 19.24% of Roma pupils in basic schools, respectively).

Nevertheless, while about 8% of pupils in basic schools are of Roma nationality, the share of socially disadvantaged is over 15% and the number of ethnic Roma is even substantially higher, however unknown (and containing a full variety of learners from excellent to poor).

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is not isolated, as visible from the list of documents above. Moreover, all activities are coordinated by the Office of Plenipotentiary of the Government SR for Roma Communities as actions to combat unemployment, improve housing conditions and settlements infrastructure, prevent from social exclusion as well as to improve educational level, are interrelated.

- Key actors involved
 - Governmental, regional and local authorities (i.a. Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the Roma Communities);
 - Schools;
 - NGOs.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

A conference "Roma and the Labour Market" aimed at identification of best practice and opportunities offered a feedback from assessment of implementation of various measures. This conference offered lessons/learned statements concerning

- main characteristics of the situation of the Roma;
- status of the Roma in the labour market with 9 conclusions concerning education of which two most VET relevant are important to be stressed here:
 - adjust vocational training to the needs of local labour markets and give preference to training and acquisition of practical experience directly in the workplace and by combining vocational training and practical preparation;
 - influencing the attitudes of the Roma adult population for sending their children to school, for becoming assistants to their children during education, creating of new supporting models of assistants training for children with special needs.

- Indicators of success

No explicit indicators of success were set, but indicators of final success can be described as follows:

- No incorrect placement of target group children in special schools;
- At least ISCED 3C level qualification gained by all target group members.

To gradually achieve the first indicator

- the new school maturity tests have been elaborated by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology sensitive to socio-cultural specificities of Roma and preventing from ill-testing caused by temporary lagging behind of children in the development of learning skills;
- enrolment in kindergartens is promoted to support pro-educational skills;
- last year in kindergarten (i.e. for 5/6-year old children) will be offered for free since September 2008;
- zero grade classes were opened at mainstream basic schools to facilitate enrolment into education;
- Roma assistants were introduced to schools to facilitate communication between teachers and Roma;
- possibilities to use Roma as a language of instruction were tested; the Roma language was re-codified and is to be standardised in July 2008.

To gradually achieve the second indicator serious obstacles have to be overcome (see

part E); nevertheless some measures have been already identified:

- scholarships for socially disadvantaged (see example 5 above);
- secondary schools for gifted Roma students;
- detached classes of VET schools;
- dormitory-type schools;
- obtaining qualification based on recognition of experiential learning;
- provision of VET in branches which were identified as attractive for Roma – nine branches for boys and eight branches for girls (as identified in the 2008 Concept of Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education).

- Integration of outcomes into other policies.

The policy is naturally interrelated and without coherence in respective policies it will not be finally effective. On the other hand, it has been estimated by the Depute Prime Minister Dušan Čaplovič that 40% of project money was not used appropriately, according to his statement at the government's press conference on 26th March 2008, and did not result in visible outcomes.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Despite many hard to overcome problems in provision of education appropriate for Roma respecting their socio-cultural specificity, despite latent, intended and unintended discrimination accompanying communication problems between majority and minority the main obstacle has socio-cultural background. The aforementioned evaluation conference pointed out that “education has not been a traditional and historical component of the Roma culture”, and that as a consequence of this, Roma are insufficiently motivated “for education in the family or community environment”.

It is important to stress that the trivial sequence education - qualification - employment is not seen as a natural path within Roma families living for a long-term on social benefits. Although they might be discriminated at the labour market, they are, and this is crucial, captured by mix of poverty and welfare traps. On the one hand, they experience poverty due to perpetuating conditions inducing low employability and unemployment; on the other hand, they are trapped by social benefits allowing for some sort of limited welfare, as demonstrated below:

Here are social benefits available for parents with four kids living in conditions of material needs as of March 2008: SKK 10 770 net, composed of SKK 5 360 (material needs) + SKK 2 350 (housing) + SKK 2 160 (four children allowances) + SKK 1 900 activation benefit, which a family father usually receives provided he works at least 40 hours monthly (10 hours weekly) under supervision of municipality. In case a father enters a job the family immediately loose material needs and activation benefits (SKK 7 260 net) while a minimum wage is less (about SKK 7 015). Thus, low skilled workers in regions with low job creation and/or close to minimum wage vacancies only are demotivated to enter employment, in particular when living in segregated settlements with poor infrastructure, poor living standards, at the same time however with cheap living costs.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Crucial is the policy intended to end a poverty trap. It is necessary to persuade families living in trap-related vicious circle to accept that

- benefitting from social service is linked to the acceptance of education - qualification - (self)employment pattern as an inevitable component of each individual life; and
- higher living standards are achievable and worth of trying.

Promoting success stories is extremely important and media must create proactive environment, otherwise any positive discrimination measures will not be utilised by those in need and vast resources spent for implementation of projects just consumed rather than facilitating a pivotal change.

3. Lifelong learning through VET

3.1. National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007. This paper describing policy context relevant till 2015 is followed by action plan specifying 13 concrete measures to be implemented till the end of 2008. Furthermore, the act on lifelong learning is in preparation based on already approved legislative intentions referring to this strategy paper. LLL Strategy does not tackle transfer between pathways, as this is not considered a crucial problem of VET/LLL. There are no barriers in vertical transfer and there are no legislative barriers in horizontal transfer in formal education. There is, however, no significant movement within horizontal transfer in IVET registered in practice. More freedom in designing individual pathways in IVET is expected from curricular reform starting in 2008. Substantial impulse for transferability within other segments and between other settings is envisaged by measures referring to validation of non-formal education and informal learning outcomes initiated by LLL Strategy. The Act on LLL should create an infrastructure and strengthen efforts in elaboration of methodology for validation of non-formal education and informal learning. After a long period of silence, guidance and counselling is recognised as crucial instrument for better aligning education pathways to labour market needs together with improvement of services to satisfy youth and adults looking for appropriate education, training and employment. Nevertheless, despite addressing two aforementioned issues intensively, some obstacles in the future can be expected.

There is a risk that the measures may be restricted in its impact on the education sector and other sectors will not be sufficiently involved in achieving coherence in policies. Lifelong learning activities still remain fragmented and efforts are predominantly focusing on respective sectors. It is expected, that intentions to develop the National Qualification Framework and restructure the National Qualification System should contribute to coherence in policies. Qualification requirements for performance of specific working activities set within the National Qualification System should support competence based approach towards recognition and validation education and training across sectors and learning settings.

3.2. Facilitating transfer between VET pathways

3.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

There were 62 307 and 17 903 graduates from programmes at ISCED 3A and ISCED 3C levels, respectively in the school year 2005/2006. Thus, there were only 22.3% of graduates at ISCED 3C level in this school year, which is in a huge contrast with 1980s data. There is no data on graduates by ISCED available in time series, but a shift towards 3A programmes can be seen from numbers of enrolled students in the following table.

Table 13

Number of secondary school students in ISCED 3A* and 3C programmes in selected years

| ISCED | 1984/85** | 1989/90** | 1994/95** | 1999/2000 | 2002/03 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| 3A | 170 006 | 184 895 | 230 192 | 205 184 | 221 970 | 252 182 | 248 699 |
| 3C | 120 456 | 124 630 | 106 424 | 57 463 | 66 971 | 60 426 | 56 277 |
| Together | 290 462 | 309 525 | 336 616 | 262 647 | 288 941 | 312 608 | 304 976 |
| Share of 3C (%) | 41.5 | 40.3 | 31.6 | 21.9 | 23.2 | 19.3 | 18.5 |

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (UOE data)

* including both VET and general education, ** without military and police schools

At the same time, VET provides enough possibilities for acquiring secondary education entitling for entry to higher education. In the 2005/2006 school year over 70% of secondary VET graduates were entitled to apply for tertiary education. Moreover, ISCED 3C graduates would have had this right if they had continued in the two-year follow-up study offered by secondary schools to ISCED 3C graduates.

Table 14

Graduates from VET programmes by ISCED levels type in selected years

| | 99/00 | 99/00 (%) | 00/01 | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 | 04/05 | 05/06 | 05/06 (%) |
|-------------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| SSS 3A | 28 197 | 44.19 | 22 634 | 18 284 | 12 032 | 20 711 | 19 184 | 18 299 | 32.60 |
| SVS 3A | 15 187 | 23.80 | 17 525 | 12 544 | 8 623 | 8 478 | 9 622 | 9 455 | 16.84 |
| ASS 3A | | | | 4 986 | 5 458 | 8 908 | 12 311 | 12 529 | 22.32 |
| Together 3A | 43 384 | 67.99 | 40 159 | 35 814 | 26 113 | 38 097 | 41 117 | 40 283 | 71.76 |
| SSS 3C | 233 | 0.37 | 66 | 23 | 68 | 28 | 24 | 26 | 0.05 |
| SVS 3C | 20 193 | 31.65 | 17 530 | 7 666 | 12 411 | 10 778 | 9 110 | 8 539 | 15.21 |
| ASS 3C | | | | 2 651 | 6 711 | 7 120 | 7 685 | 7 285 | 12.98 |
| Together 3C | 20 426 | 32.01 | 17 596 | 10 340 | 19 190 | 17 926 | 16 819 | 15 850 | 28.24 |
| Together 3 | 63 810 | 100.00 | 57 755 | 46 154 | 45 303 | 56 023 | 57 936 | 56 133 | 100.00 |

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (UOE data)

* including both VET and general education, ** without military and police schools

On the other hand, an increasing share of graduates from ISCED 3A education is criticised by employers from the manufacturing sector facing a lack of ISCED 3C graduates. In fact, a growth in national economy is driven by investment in automotive and electronic sectors, predominantly needing blue-collar professions. Therefore call for reducing inflow into ISCED 3A and higher levels of education is urgently pronounced by employers dominating over other topics; increase in vertical and horizontal transferability is not considered a hot topic now in debates among key players.

A shift to ISCED 3A programmes is caused by several factors: higher attractiveness of ISCED 3A levels as a "maturita" school leaving certificate is often considered as granting higher status compared to the certificate of apprenticeship. Furthermore, for a long period of 1990s, ISCED 3C graduates were very much vulnerable at the labour market as a consequence of transformation of economy. The third important factor was introduction of financing per capita without measures aimed at securing high standards of ISCED 3A graduates, which together with decreasing population have caused a fight for students regardless their quality and capability.

The main aim of all policies in VET was to reduce costs, which was excellently achieved by two measures: financing per capita transferred from the central government to regional authorities and by empowering regions to restructure a network of schools and a network of programmes. Negative impacts caused by stressing economic incentives only were as follows:

- softening of output standards in ISCED 3A programmes; and
- almost exclusive focus of schools on the input market, offering provision of education and training predominantly to satisfy students' and their parents' desires.

As a consequence of broken links between enterprises and VET schools and reluctance of the government to offer fiscal incentives to align graduates profiles and their numbers to labour market needs a severe mismatch between supply and demand in output market – labour market was deepened. Thus, an act on VET to be prepared in 2008 will concentrate on strengthening cooperation between schools and enterprises, and will focus primarily on addressing discrepancies on the labour market rather than on refinement of provision of VET programmes.

3.2.2. Examples of policy measures

There were no specific policies introduced to address transferability and flexibility within the system. The education system evolved under the pressure of factors described in preceding chapter to satisfy students' and their parents' desires regardless the development in the labour market. Disregarding future employment possibilities has again several reasons. A part of population still lives in persuasion that the state will offer enough positions for graduates. A part of population, predominantly in rural areas, facing the collapse of traditional state-managed factories and uncertainty in the labour market during the whole 1990s, ceased linking VET with professions to be performed in the vicinity. Furthermore, many young people started to see education and training as a period postponing the time to enter labour market and concentrated on finding a job abroad regardless of their initial qualification. Thus transfer within initial VET and links between IVET and CVET were not considered important by inhabitants.

Although the Slovak education system is very strong in provision of secondary VET, the provision of post-secondary non-tertiary education is very limited. An experiment of 1990s to introduce higher professional education into selected secondary schools in order to create non-university tertiary education network has been finally stopped, although an intention to offer specialised VET on ISCED 5B level for those not wishing to enter universities was sound. Now, lacking legislation to back this segment of VET and again influence of financing per capita together with population decrease channel youth to universities, which after Bologna transformation massively offer short bachelor studies. Future will show whether bachelor studies will address regional needs and produce graduates really needed by the labour market and not just graduates immediately continuing their studies to achieve master degrees. Although it is envisaged by the law to classify higher education institutions and separate classical research universities from non-university institutions. This process is conditioned by completing the complex accreditation of all universities expected in 2009.

More freedom for individuals and schools in designing programmes in IVET is expected from the new Education Act adopted by the parliament in May 2008. It is too soon to assess whether this really happens, as schools have just started to prepare their own school educational programmes, which should stick to newly elaborated state educational programmes.

It is expected that the refinement of provision of VET programmes will be raised later after revitalisation of links between education and employment and in relation regarding preparation of act on lifelong learning. An important part of this act should address validation of non-formal and informal learning and interlinking diverse learning settings. A measure is intended (see example below) to allow designing own learning pathways to obtain qualification.

A. Title of policy measure

Managing and planning own education and career paths

(incorporated in the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007). The policy is in a planning phase.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Formal, non-formal and informal learning systems are not open and interlinked enough to meet citizens' real needs concerning acquisition of new/partial qualifications and new jobs. The formal system is not flexible enough to respond to the demand for new qualifications required by the labour market.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The aim of the strategy is to create a legislative background, which will guarantee citizens access to repeatedly obtaining new qualifications throughout their lives, to develop their key competences and actively participate in increasing their chances for employment. The policy is based on four explicit principles, among which also the principle of validation of non-formal and informal learning is being listed. The system will allow a transfer between formal and non-formal system providing citizens with the possibility to choose their own flexible learning pathways. The system will allow recognising citizens' learning outcomes at any point of lifelong learning and allow them to acquire equal qualifications through formal and non-formal education. In order to be more oriented in the diverse education and career paths citizens will be assisted by the system of lifelong guidance and counselling including a free of charge information system for non-formal learning (see example of policy in 2.2.2.).

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Citizens interested in (or in need of) acquisition of new qualifications allowing them better assert at the labour market. Special attention will be paid to disabled citizens.

- Status of implementation

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, followed by adoption of the action plan for its implementation by the Ministry of Education in 2007. The act on lifelong learning is under preparation.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy will be implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/social policy approach?

The policy is part of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance policies in Slovakia.

- Key actors involved

- The national authority to be appointed by the act on lifelong learning will be responsible for certification of educational institutions; accreditation of non-formal learning programmes developed in modules through assigning credits to individual modules; certification of teachers/lectors and managers in non-formal learning, and counsellors;
- Individuals/legal persons authorised by the national authority will be responsible for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. According to the strategy this responsibility should be passed to schools in formal education providing programmes leading to respective qualifications;
- Formal and non-formal learning providers;
- Guidance and counselling services providers.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

As the policy has not been implemented, no evaluation study has been elaborated so far. According to the strategy the open system of lifelong learning will allow citizens to continue their education whenever they will be in need of updating, broadening or changing their qualification and it will allow validation of their prior learning. Citizens will be allowed to manage and plan their own education and career paths. Students will be encouraged by educational institutions to take responsibility for their own learning and set their own goals.

- Indicators of success

- Adoption of Act on LLL and subsequent legislative provisions;
- Developing a system of lifelong guidance and counselling;
- Developing and launching the information system for non-formal learning.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Policy is in the initial phase.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

As policy is in the initial phase, no obstacles were encountered. Nevertheless, the following obstacles can emerge

- Resistance of employers and the formal system to recognition of education (qualifications) obtained in the non-formal system;
- Lack of interest of the decisive sphere to create conditions for implementation of innovative features into the non-formal system and resistance of formal system to accept these features;
- Risk of devaluation of formal and non-formal education.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Implementation of the policy is at the beginning.

3.3. Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures

3.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Policy progress in career guidance and counselling services since 2002 was at the beginning influenced primarily by the process of Slovakia's accession to European Union, and by activities resulting from this process (especially *acquis communautaire*), after the accession in May 2004 it was influenced mainly by Lisbon Strategy and its implementation into national legislation and operational programmes. An echo of Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000; consultation process on national level 2001) with its key message 5 'Rethinking guidance and counselling' had also some positive consequences on policy development in this area.

Guidance and counselling in employment services were restructured by the new act on employment services introduced in February 2004 – besides career information and guidance provided both for job seekers and those interested in employment, as well as for employers (helping them in choosing an employee for a vacant job place), provision of counselling services, especially for disadvantaged job seekers (graduates, older workers, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, etc.) was strengthened. Individual action plans became a service guaranteed by labour office for those job seekers who were registered longer than three months and were in risk of being long-term unemployed. According to this Act, individual action plans can be provided by qualified staff only – counsellors with university degree (5-years study course).

Joining EU in 2004 opened for Slovakia access to financial sources of the European Social Fund and other structural funds. Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources 2004-2006, introduced early 2004, provided a lot of opportunities to build capacities for career information, guidance and counselling services provision. Hundreds of projects have been implemented throughout the country since then, and they were and are focused mainly on development and implementation of guidance and counselling activities for job seekers and those interested in employment, and on training of career advisers and counsellors both in educational and employment sectors.

The most important for pushing career guidance and counselling significantly forward was the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, approved by the government in April 2007. Besides this, other policy document on wider and/or other aspects of counselling services was also approved in March 2007 – the Concept of Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling System and its Implementation into Practice, which is dealing partially also with career guidance and counselling in primary and secondary schools.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance is based on all relevant European Union's and national policy documents, especially the Memorandum on LLL and the Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (2004). The Strategy is a policy document presenting our vision of where we are and where we want to get to – it is based on a deep analysis of current situation and it sets goals in both areas, which are presented not independently but in close interconnection, for next few years (until 2011). Career guidance is viewed as a strong instrument helping people manage their careers and improve quality of their professional lives. An Action plan with concrete steps to be taken and implemented was subsequently approved by the Ministry of Education in October 2007. In April 2008 a process of establishing the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance was initiated by the Ministry of Education – this platform will serve as an advisory body for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the key stakeholders in this field.

In spite of quite positive development in last few years there are still some gaps, open or more often unnamed problems, which hampered or are hampering more noticeable progress. First of all, it seems that the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance should have come three or four years earlier – before Slovakia's EU accession and mainly

before Slovakia had an opportunity to utilize EU financial sources for operational programmes. Having such a strategy before, all those national, regional and local projects could have been more effective, especially in the sense that they would be able to follow targets set by the strategy and create step by step an outlined picture, a desired state of art. Slovakia at the moment of accession had not a common vision, a common agreement on what should be done in the field of career guidance and counselling, what were the priorities, etc. – we started to develop such a plan, later called the Strategy of LLG, with some delay and part of EU sources were therefore used less effectively. The next financial period, 2007 – 2013, however, will allow avoiding such approach – we already have our vision and now the discussion is how to reach all those targets, using also the support of EU funds.

Another problem, though not a new one, is insufficient communication and cooperation of both key ministries. In spite of the fact that the Strategy of LLL and LLG was approved by the government, the Ministry of Education has played here the key role. Ministry of Labour does not feel to be addressed by the EU Resolution on Lifelong Guidance – it was initiated by DG Education and Culture, not by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, so “we have nearly nothing to do with it, it is not our resolution”. This attitude is reflected also in the Strategy – the Ministry of Education is much more active and taking responsibility for further steps, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family on the other hand is passive and waiting for someone else to tell them what to do.

3.3.2. Examples of policy measures

| |
|--|
| <p>A. Title of policy/measure</p> <p>Introduction to the World of Work – an optional school subject at secondary schools</p> <p>Implementation of policy started by approval of syllabi in 2003 and subsequent pilots in the school year 2003/2004.</p> |
| <p>B. Outline of the policy/measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale <p>In the Slovak school system there is no systematic career education on elementary schools level and only since 2003 there has been some at the secondary VET schools – schools have an option (not obligation) to include to their curriculum a new subject – Introduction to the world of work. Importance of career education is supported also by the fact that unemployment rate of young people under 25 years, especially those from secondary specialised and secondary vocational schools, is in Slovakia one of the highest in EU27.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives and/or measurable targets <p>The objective of this optional subject is to improve the readiness of secondary school graduates to enter labour market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target groups/educational level(s)/ educational sector(s) <p>Students in the last, i. e. in the third or in the fourth grade (mainstream ISCED 3A programmes have four grades and ISCED 3C programmes three grades)</p> |

- Status of implementation

The course in its full version has 30 hours and its content is divided into 11 topics:

- Introduction to the labour legislation;
- Collective labour legislation;
- Employment relationship and contract;
- Working time and rest periods;
- Wages;
- Obstacles to work;
- Labour protection;
- Employment, training and re-training;
- Inflation and unemployment;
- World of work and labour market;
- How to apply for a job.

It is obvious that only last two or three topics have a direct link to career guidance and have also some practical value for students and through them it is possible to acquire some practical skills necessary for successful start on the labour market. A recommended visit to labour office and its Career Information and Guidance Centre as part of activities within this subject has also a very high value for students and allows close cooperation of VET providers with employment services.

There is no information where and in how many secondary schools this subject has been introduced. Textbooks were published in 2006, and training of teachers responsible for this subject started in the same year.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

Implementation of the new school subject is possible in all secondary VET schools; it is implemented also in some secondary general schools (grammar schools).

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

Career education through this tool might be viewed as a part of policy measures recommended by the National Action Plan on Employment (implemented since 1998) and its first pillar – increasing employability of job seekers and those entering labour market.

- Key actors involved

Secondary schools

D. Evaluation

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)
- Indicators of success
- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Data for evaluation are not available yet.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)
- What issues remain to be addressed?

Optional school subject Introduction to the world of work implemented in secondary schools seems to be the right step forward. The problem is that systematic career education is missing on the elementary level and this influences quite substantially the quality of career decisions (the first career choice) of the whole population of 15 years old pupils.

Institutional capacities for training of teachers who should teach this subject are quite limited and number of those who are sufficiently qualified is increasing very slowly.

3.4. Validating (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning

3.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

Validating skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning has been subject of academic discussions for a long time initiated by consultation process to the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning. There were however no measures implemented to introduce relevant policies, and the only experience which could facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning was related to projects of international cooperation, of which the Leonardo da Vinci project EPANIL (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning CZ/04/B/F/PP-168010, <http://www.epanil.net/>) and ESF project ATENA (Centre for the Development of Non-formal Learning and Personal Development, SOP HR 2004/1-189) are worth mentioning. Till 2005 no decision-making body got involved in elaboration of respective policy. The first impulse to gradual development of legislation came from the national ESF project Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Life-long Learning in the SR for the Labour Market, managed by Academia Istropolitana, an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education, which was appointed a task to elaborate the background documents to the policy paper aimed at further development of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance measures till 2015. The project was carried out within the Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 "Increasing qualification and adaptability of employees and persons entering the labour market", Measure 3.2 "Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with a view to improving the qualification and adaptability of employees". Subsequently the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government in 2007. Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is one of strategic priorities stated within this paper. Subsequently elaborated act on lifelong learning should interlink all segment of education and all settings of learning and it should introduce a system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Concrete measures are intended (see example of policy below) to allow for obtaining qualification or partial qualification by means of accumulating credits from training and through recognition of prior learning. The progress in this area is hampered by non-existence of an influential promoter. There is neither a decision-making body nor an important institution promoting elaboration of this policy, and there is still not a strong enough demand for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is partly due to

- very high share of secondary educated people;
- widely and strongly regulated process of obtaining qualification, which is still often input and process driven with increasing however still insufficient stress on learning outcomes.

Reluctance of institutions of formal education to develop know-how aimed at identification of relevant competences and elaboration of performance standards hampers development of quality methodology in support of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. A turning point is expected from the Act on lifelong learning and ESF Operational Programme Education, which should address promotion establishment of the system of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning within Priority Axe 2.

3.4.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The measure was prioritised within the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Slovakia faces a lack of qualified labour force as well as a low participation of adult population in continuing education. The current system of lifelong learning is characterised by insufficient links between formal and non-formal systems and very limited possibilities for validation of non-formal learning outcomes.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The policy is aimed at implementing a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes enabling individuals to acquire partial or full qualification equal to qualification attained within the formal system. Two forms of validation of learning outcomes are proposed within the strategy: “a credit system for non-formal programmes, and validation of non-formal education and informal learning outcomes of persons from practice through established national authority with defined competences”.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Citizens interested in (or in need of) acquisition of new qualifications allowing them to better assert at the labour market. A special attention will be paid to disabled citizens.

- Status of implementation

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007. After adoption of the act on lifelong learning, which is under preparation, subsequent legislative provisions will have to be adopted; in particular the decree of the Ministry of Education setting the details concerning application for accreditation of non-formal learning programmes, details on fulfilling the duties of educational institutions and the content and structure of the national qualification system, and the by-law of the Ministry of Education setting qualification and evaluation standards for respective partial and full qualifications. Furthermore, it will be necessary to adopt the statute of the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Non-Formal Learning.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The measure will be implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

The policy is part of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance policies in Slovakia. It is included in the measures listed in the latest strategy paper of the government - Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 approved on 4th June 2008 within the priority area Education.

- Key actors involved

It is a governmental policy, however efficiency of implementation will heavily depend on newly established authorities and on respective formal and non-formal learning providers as well as guidance and counselling services providers.

The national authority to be appointed by the act on lifelong learning will be responsible for certification of educational institutions; accreditation of non-formal learning programmes as well as for authorisation of individuals/legal persons responsible for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. The accreditation commission will be established as an affiliate to this national authority.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The policy should contribute to increasing supply of qualified labour force, to increasing employability of individuals and raising participation of adults in lifelong learning; however it is currently in an initial phase only.

- Indicators of progress and success

The following indicators were explicitly stated to be monitored after adoption of act on lifelong learning and subsequent legislative provisions:

- validation and verification system developed and launched;
 - number of certified educational institutions;
 - number of accredited non-formal learning programmes;
 - number of certified teachers/lectors;
 - number of authorised individuals/legal persons (schools) responsible for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- a system of lifelong guidance and counselling developed;

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Policy is predominantly education sector-driven and closer cooperation of all sectors of economy will have to be strengthened in order to cover gradually all (partial) qualifications. In particular coherence with employment policy must be secured.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Implementation of the policy is at its beginning. Nevertheless, delay in the policy is caused by reluctance of brick and mortar institutions which partly feel being

endangered by this kind of policies and partly seriously object a risk of softening qualification standards in case of insufficiently prepared methodology of verification. Following obstacles can emerge, according to SWOT analysis included in the policy description:

- Resistance of employers and the formal system towards recognition of education (qualifications) obtained in the non-formal system;
- Lack of interest of the decisive sphere to create conditions for implementation of innovative features into the non-formal system and resistance of formal system to accept these features;
- Risk of devaluation of formal and non-formal education.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

- Increased efforts must be offered to the development of methodology for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- Policy is predominantly focusing on non-formal learning; informal learning issues are addressed less thoroughly. In order to expand the policy and to validate and verify informal learning outcomes as well evaluation of experience from practice seems to be inevitable.

4. Improving quality of VET

4.1. National policy context on improving quality of VET

All working quality system mechanisms in IVET are inherent to the education system. School directors, establishers and the State School Inspection are empowered by law to take care of quality; however, all these activities are aimed at assessment of performance of students in educational terms. The first impulse to address quality management from the institutional point of view came from the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 9/2006 Coll. on the Structure and Content of Reporting on Educational Activities, Outcomes and Conditions of School and School Facilities, which introduced obligatory annual reporting to the public and softly pushed schools to declaration of mission statements and self-evaluation. Nevertheless, no strong accountability inducing mechanism has been implemented and no national policy on quality management adopted. Significantly, quality management in education was not topical for the ESF within the programming period 2004-2006. Despite this a demand driven project the Quality of School (see example of policy below) originally aimed at training the pedagogical staff in the Košice Region within Measure 3.2 "Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with a view to improving the qualification and adaptability of employees" was carried out, besides others influencing quality management practice at secondary schools. Within this project 30 secondary schools, out of which 24 VET schools, entered the process of adoption the quality management system (QMS) and six out of these VET schools have already received the ISO norm 9001:2000 certificate.

In CVET and training for the labour market, quality control has been left so far purely on the market forces and a feedback from clients. Despite several calls for introduction of certification of providers the only quality checking mechanism is bound with the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Further Education accrediting respective educational activities (courses). Such accreditation, although not obligatory for entering the market, was originally demanded by law for the labour market training paid by labour offices.

Since 2004 amendment of the Act on employment services by the Act No. 191/2004 Coll., it is up to labour offices whether they insist on this accreditation or not.

In contrast to earlier ESF programming period, quality management is addressed extensively in 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education. Non-existence of national QMS was expressed a weak point and introduction of QMS in all segments of VET, regional schooling, higher education and CVET/LLL indicated an explicit goal to be achieved. In autumn 2008, after a long period of passivity, Slovakia also finally entered the ENQA-VET network.

The need for highly qualified VET teachers and trainers is recognized in Slovakia, however the endangering by brain drain and ageing is dominantly seen within the more general issue of continuing professional development of all pedagogical staff. It is the opportunity to made use of ESF sources to develop a measure to address VET teachers and trainers specifically. It is also expected that to be prepared new law on VET will finally recognize the importance to see VET from much broader perspective than a part of school system and will make all social partners more sensitive to current problems with quality of VET.

4.2. Improving quality in VET provision

4.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

As there is no typical apprenticeship system in Slovakia, pupils choosing IVET are seen and treated by legislation equally with grammar school students. Thus, quality of IVET was addressed within the policies to improve the quality of education and training as a whole, and their vocational skills are developed under the dominance of the school system. Simultaneously, curriculum development innovations are predominantly driven by schools' and educators' points of view.

Curricula at schools were represented by the so-called basic pedagogical documents (BPD). Whenever changes in BPD were initiated, an initiator has usually been a school, in 12 cases however new BPD were elaborated as a consequence of employers' initiation. New proposals are being submitted to the sectoral expert commissions established at the State Institute of Vocational Education responsible for checking and finalisation BPD, which have finally been approved or disapproved by the Ministry of Education. Below are numbers of the newly introduced BPD.

Table 15

Innovated BPD in study and training branches of secondary VET schools* in 2003-2007

| Year | Number of innovated curricula |
|------|-------------------------------|
| 2003 | 36 |
| 2004 | 57 |
| 2005 | 34 |
| 2006 | 85 |
| 2007 | 32 |

Source: State Institute of Vocational Education

* schools under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education only

After being approved, the documentation for specific study or training branch has become binding for all schools offering respective branch of study. The approved documentation allowed school managements and teachers to make changes up to 10% of the weekly instruction hours and 30% of the content in individual grades, offering the possibility to adjust curriculum to both development in science and technology and specific regional/local needs including labour market needs. All curricula were developed based on the Standard of Secondary VET developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education and approved by the Ministry of Education on 10th July 2002. To assist the developers, a manual for state curricula development was prepared by the State Institute of Vocational Education in 2003.

All aforementioned documents refer to competences specifying key competences, general competences and vocational competences. Vocational competences must reflect job profiles and professions/occupations and it was stressed that they should be elaborated in cooperation with social partners. Nevertheless, the participation of social partners in expert commissions has been insufficient, according to practice of the State Institute of Vocational Education. Substantially more active participation of employers was visible in sectors lacking a labour force, and in particular, only after opening the labour market in the European Union and a decrease in unemployment, employers became much more interested in curricula and graduates' profiles. The following is an expression of criticism stated in the ESF Operational Programme Education introducing quality management an important topic for a new programming period: "With regard to the quality of education it can be stated that the involvement of sectors, self-governments, employers, labour offices, educational institutions and other social partners in the development of the content of education is low".

Since September 2008 new policy in curriculum development is coming in force, according to the in May 2008 approved new Education Act. With a two-level approach to curricula development schools will have a final say in curriculum development by developing the school educational programme (school curriculum). The state represented by the State Institute of Vocational Education was responsible for 20 VET ISCED 3A state educational programmes and 15 VET ISCED 3C state educational programmes. It is expected that decentralisation of curriculum development will attract regional players to the development of school educational programmes and it is expected by authorities as well as experts that under the support of the ESF a national model of quality management will be developed and implemented. ESF programming documents are stressing this as a priority.

With regard to CVET/LLL and in accordance with intentions of act of lifelong learning, which is under preparation, a national certification authority should be established and certification of providers introduced.

Although there were several initiatives opening room for discussion about quality management, no relevant policy has been set and no national quality model has been developed. Common Quality Assurance Framework remained a theoretical concept only with no influence on practice. Slovakia did not participate in quality assurance networking and entered only in last minutes the ENQA-VET network. With exception of activities within higher education and a very positive example of introduction of quality management system initiated by secondary schools in eastern Slovakia (see example of policy No. 1 below) there is no successful action to report. Furthermore, promotion of school quality management systems including supporting development of models for evaluation and self-evaluation is for the first time explicitly stressed and operationalised in 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education within Priority Axe 1, Measure 1.1 "Transformation of traditional school into a modern one". Similarly, promotion of quality culture in higher education institutions is stressed in Measure 1.2 "Higher education institutions and research & development as the driving forces in the development of a knowledge-based society".

Traditional efforts to improve quality of education were however conducted and reform of school leaving examination is worth mentioning to demonstrate this kind of measure (see example of policy No. 2 below).

4.2.2. Examples of policy measures

Example 1

A. Title of policy measure

The ESF project “Quality of school – a guarantee of the regional schooling reform“

(5th September 2006 to 30th September 2008)

The project addressed various aspects of school quality issues. The main priority was given to securing professional development of pedagogical staff, including increase of foreign language and ICT skills. The example focuses just on a part of the project directly aimed at quality management issues.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The district where the project is carried out is characterised by a high unemployment rate, a high number of Roma population and a high share of population with completed basic education, which lays increased requirements on the education system. Currently, there has been no system of lifelong learning of teachers focusing on quality of education methodology development. Managers at secondary schools as well as teachers tend to focus on quality of educational outcomes only, and they have neither time nor experience in dealing with quality issues in a comprehensive way. One of the possibilities how to solve this problem is to implement quality management system according to ISO 9001:2000.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

Main aim of the project is to increase quality of managerial and pedagogical processes at secondary schools and thus to contribute to the reform of regional schools. The following aims were set with regard to the quality issues:

- develop and verify the system of education in quality management of secondary schools and educational processes;
- carry out training in quality management for 60 pedagogues – mainly managers of secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region;
- develop quality guides for secondary schools to acquire ISO 9001:2000 certificate;
- certify 30 schools and set up consultancy and audit centres at secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region.

- Education level(s)/sector(s)

- Secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region;
- 60 pedagogues, predominantly school managers.

- Status of implementation

The activity Quality of School started in September 2007. Since 2006 till September 2007 training of pedagogues was carried out comprising 240 hours in 5 thematic areas (Quality management, Process management, Application of ISO 9001 in practice, Client satisfaction – student, society, parent; Projecting and project documentation). Between May 2007 and May 2008 the training graduates were supposed to elaborate and implement a quality guide for their own schools, which was a prerequisite for awarding certification. Schools meeting criteria were checked and certified by the

Slovak certifying authority PQM. As of April 2008 PQM awarded certificates to 11 schools out of which 6 were VET schools.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The project is carried out on regional level in the Košice Self-Governing Region.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

The demand-driven project was launched within the European Social Fund, Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 "Increasing the qualification and adaptability of employees and persons entering the labour market", Measure 3.2 "Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with a view to improving the qualification and adaptability of employees".

- Key actors involved

30 secondary schools of the Košice Self-Governing Region (6 grammar schools and 24 secondary VET schools) will implement the quality management system and develop quality for certification purposes.

Faculty of Economy of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Department of Management and Marketing) provided training and awarded certificates to trainees.

PQM, s.r.o., the Slovak certifying authority accredited by the Slovak National Accreditation Service, is checking the quality management system, existence of functioning quality system and issues ISO 9001:2000 certificates to schools.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

As the project has not been completed, more detailed analyses have not yet been elaborated. Nevertheless, according to schools' experience implementation of the system resulted in more effective work of school management, teachers, as well as students. Schools have defined their visions and objectives of their further development. The implemented control system allows for revealing problems and solving them operatively. Schools expect that with implementation of the quality system they will become more competitive among schools fighting for students and their international credit will raise, too.

- Indicators of success

- Number of schools awarded the ISO 9001:2001 certificate in the field "Educational activities": 11 as of April 2008;
- Number of pedagogues trained: 60;
- Number of consulting and audit centres set up at secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region: 11 as of April 2008.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

The results should contribute to the reform of regional schools and support dissemination of quality culture in regional schools. Particularly valuable is a high share

of secondary VET schools interested in quality management, which together with Slovakia joining ENQA-VET creates conditions for successful implementation of quality management within ESF Operational Programme Education projects in the 2007-2013 programming period.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Training took place in concord with the project's deadlines; however, the schedule for schools' certification had to be adjusted, as it was not possible for the certifying authority selected within the public procurement procedure to carry out certification audits at all 30 schools within one month. That's why the certification audits have started in May 2007 and gradually have been carried out at schools ready for certification (i.e. with completed documentation and elaborated quality guide).

Sustainability of the project's outcomes has been secured. Each school that wishes to retain the ISO 9000:2001 certificate has to constantly improve its quality management system, and has to be a subject to yearly certification audits. As resulted from negotiations with the Department of Education of the Košice Self-Governing Region, financial sources enabling schools to undergo recertification audits will be covered from the region's budget.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Similarly to other ESF projects refinancing expenditures was too slow. The project closing was planned for June 2008, nevertheless, due to missing financial means a final conference had to be shifted to September 2008.

Example 2

A. Title of policy measure

A new model of ISCED 3A "maturita" school leaving examination

The instrument is implemented since the 2004/2005 school year legislatively backed by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 510/2004 Coll.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

A previous fully school-based model, with teachers in a double role - educators and examiners, was considered untenable because of not comparable assessment (marking) between schools, gradually leading to softening quality standards.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

It is an assessment driven reform. The key objective is to provide for valid, nation-wide comparable information on students' performance for all: students, parents, employers and subsequent education providers, predominantly higher education institutions.

The most important changes are as follows:

- Introduction of two-component examination, internal - similar to original "maturita" and external based on standardised tests;
- There are three levels of "maturita" commissions (central/national, school, subject) introduced, with significant representation of external examiners and out of school

experts. The subject maturita commission is now composed of three subject specialists, headed by a regional authority, assigned professional, coming outside the respective school. The homeroom teacher is not the commission member anymore and the teacher who used to teach the respective subject is not necessarily a member of the commission either. The members of the commission are appointed by the head of school. In VET schools a delegate of the professional chamber may become a standing member of the commission provided he/she meets relevant professional requirements. An additional expert from the field, even without VET experience, might be invited to join the commission, however, without the right to assess;

- The examination at VET schools includes a so-called vocational component, which consists of theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part includes 25 comprehensive topics overarching knowledge of all vocational subjects in a respective study programme and the practical part includes up to 15 topics.
 - Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Students and teachers of secondary schools

- Status of implementation

The new model of “maturita” school leaving examination has been introduced by adopting the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 510/2004 Coll. on school leaving at secondary schools and completing training at other educational institutions adopted in August 2004. The decree has been amended three times with the last amendment in 2007.

In 2005 standardized tests were only introduced in Mathematics, English and German. The range has gradually increased and in its fourth year in 2008 the external component comprised 11 subjects (different languages and Mathematics).

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The instrument is implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

Policy is interrelated with policies aimed at decentralisation of curriculum development and with efforts to improve quality checking. In VET schools, it is in line with efforts to strengthen cooperation of schools with businesses. Policy also addressed the traditional school leaving examination questions. A shift towards competence/learning outcomes based programming and assessment was also visible in efforts to set examination topics differently.

Implementation of the new “maturita” school leaving examination has also been supported by the ESF projects carried out by the National Institute of Education aimed at designing a catalogue of appropriate tasks and developing standardised tests; and the projects of the National Institute for Education and the State Institute of Vocational Education focused on further training of general and vocational subject teachers for new “maturita” school leaving exams. In case of vocational subject teachers special attention was paid to development of comprehensive topics for both theoretical and practical part of exam.

- Key actors involved

- Ministry of Education;
- National Institute for Education;
- State Institute of Vocational Education.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

Policies were annually evaluated and the evaluation reports submitted to the Ministry of Education via Central “Maturita” Commission. Identified proposals of change were implemented and if necessary, the respective decree of the Ministry of Education was amended.

- Indicators of success

There were no explicit indicators of success set; evaluation of policy was based on reporting from stakeholders.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

In concord with a new Education Act valid since September 2008, standardised tests should be developed, administered and assessed in the future by a newly to be established institution named the National Institute for Certified Measurements in Education. This institution will also be responsible for assigning the written form of internal part of “maturita” examination. It will also be responsible for carrying out international measurements Slovakia is participating in.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

There were repeatedly difficulties with distribution of tests by professional courier service, as there were reports about violation of confidentiality rules, due to early delivery of tests. The problem has been solved only partly. In 2008, each school director had to come to the regional seat and lift tests in person on the very day of testing.

Quality of tests is permanently questioned. Improvement of the quality of testing is the main reason for already agreed establishment of the National Institute of Certifying Measurement in Education. This institute is to be established in 2009 by separation of an existing unit at the National Institute for Education and by extending it up to 60 employees.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Learning outcomes/competences based assessment should be further refined within in-service training of teachers.

External testing should be extended to more subjects.

4.3. Supporting professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions

4.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

According to the Concept for Professional Development of Teachers within the Career System adopted by the government on 18th April 2007, teaching profession in Slovakia is characteristic by unclear professional status of teaching staff, ageing, feminisation of the profession, lack of qualified teachers and regional imbalances in teacher qualification, low attractiveness of the profession, insufficient attention paid to human resource development within the education sector as a whole, insufficient HRD practice of directors of schools and school establishments and inadequacies in both pre-service education and in-service training. Crisis in the profession is marked Europe-wide and 2008 is the year of strikes and protests of teachers and trainers in many European countries. Unlike these countries, teachers and trainers in Slovakia do not react to this crisis, in detail described in the annex to the aforementioned policy paper, through protests. Nevertheless, dangerous processes are passing silently. Best student teachers do not enter teaching profession and a lot of others can see their position at schools as the third best option after a position in business and teaching/training activities within the business sector. Discussion about teacher burnout occurrence penetrated from scientific journals into periodicals, where even anecdotal evidence based data on 80% burnout teachers was mentioned. Regardless the reliability of this data, the opinion, that without incentives the teachers and trainers will not welcome the incoming curricular reform, seems to be in place.

The career system (see example of policy below) outlined in the aforementioned policy paper reflecting the needs to improve continuing professional development of teachers and trainers is welcomed by pedagogical staff, and a new act on pedagogical staff, already in pipeline, is viewed positively also due to the intention to increase remuneration of pedagogical staff up to 1.4 of average wage in national economy (see Improving the Status of Teachers is Proving Costly. In: Cedefop Info 2/2007).

Long lasting weak point of pedagogical staff - insufficient ICT skills and foreign language acquisition, is targeted by many ESF projects from earlier and current programming periods. Three ESF projects starting in 2006 and finishing by the end of 2008 directly reflect Integrated Guideline 24 (2005-2008) "Adapt Education and Training Systems in Response to New Competence Requirements":

- improvement in using ICT in education process by teachers;
- targeting pre-service training of teachers on improvement ICT and foreign languages command;
- establishment on national educational portal;

as reported within the Progress Report on the Implementation of the National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic for 2006-2008 as of October 2007.

In fact, monitoring the impact of training on trainees and in particular avoiding the Mathew effect (skilled are trained more than not skilled) is currently a much more serious problem than the volume and variety of provision of training itself.

Slovakia has a long tradition of a very detailed regulation of pre-service and in-service training of teachers. Since the end of 1940s teachers have been required to obtain tertiary education and since the 2000s strengthened by the Bologna reform even kindergarten teachers and VET trainers massively graduate from bachelor studies. At the same time however practical training developed to the weak point, as teacher training colleges suffer from technological lagging, insufficient using of ICT and insufficient openness towards other relevant institutions, e.g. teacher training colleges insufficiently participate in in-service training and policy making processes institutionally. Although the continuing professional development of teachers and trainers reform has been widely discussed, well-grounded and it reflects European documents, one important recommendation is not met: Recommendation

to national policy makers from the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications reads “the contribution of research and evidence based practice to the development of new knowledge about education and training should be promoted“. Improvement can hardly be expected due to the insufficient level of funding educational research. Slovakia is among poorly performing EU countries in funding research and development for a long period (0.49% GDP compared to 1.84% in EU27 in 2006, according to CERD indicator, Eurostat).

4.3.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Professional development of teachers in a career system

The Concept Paper for the Professional Development of Teachers in a Career System was adopted by the government on 18th April 2007. It creates a basis for preparation and adoption of the act on the status of pedagogues and the regulation of the government on the catalogue of professional standards for pedagogues.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The current status and quality of teachers do not meet the requirements of knowledge society declared by the European Union. Within the concept a crisis of the profession is characterised by

- unclear professional status and identity of pedagogues;
- ageing;
- feminisation of the profession;
- insufficient and unbalanced qualification of pedagogues across regions;
- low attractiveness of the profession;
- insufficient quality of human resource strategy in the sector;
- low quality of human resource management at schools and school establishments;
- insufficient quality of pre-service and in-service training.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main objective of the policy is to increase professional competences and quality of pedagogues and to increase their remuneration.

The following specific targets were defined in the concept paper:

- defining requirements for pedagogues' professional competences through professional standards;
- developing a career system including career paths and levels enabling pedagogues to choose their own ways of professional development;
- developing a system of in-service training as a part of lifelong learning;
- developing a credit system which will include training of pedagogues in accredited programmes or other creative activities presenting outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- developing a new system of differentiated remuneration linked to professional standards, a career system and a credit system.

The new system of remuneration is aimed at achieving 1.4 average wage of the national economy.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

The policy is targeted at pedagogues in regional schooling.

The concept paper proposes five categories of pedagogues:

- teacher;
- trainer;
- tutor;
- assistant to teacher, assistant to trainer and assistant to tutor;
- counsellor.

The following four career levels have been proposed within each category:

- beginning pedagogue;
- pedagogue;
- pedagogue with the first attestation;
- pedagogue with the second attestation.

Furthermore, two career positions have been proposed:

- pedagogue specialist;
- leading pedagogue/manager.

- Status of implementation

The concept paper was approved by the government on 18th April 2007. Subsequently the legislative intentions of the new law prepared following the concept paper were submitted to public discussion in summer 2007 and approved by the government on 17th October 2007. The act on the status of pedagogical staff of schools and school establishments is still under preparation.

A special working group developed a Methodology Proposal for Developing Professional Standards for Individual Categories of Pedagogical Staffs. The crucial policy paper aimed at development of professional standards of pedagogical staff and a new design of career paths is however still pending.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy will be implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of a broader education policy. The new act will be closely linked to the new Education Act adopted by the parliament in May 2008 coming in force since the 2008/2009 school year. Professional standards of pedagogues should be based on state and school educational programmes defined by the Education Act.

The concept reflects European documents, such as Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and recommendations of the Commission's Working Group B. It is in concord with priorities of the National Reform Programme and its elaboration is explicitly mentioned in the autumn 2006 NRP implementation report. The concept is reflected within the ESF Operational Programme Education covering 2007-2013 programming period. Policy is included among strengths within SWOT analysis and the development of professional standards is considered inevitable for improving pre-service and in-service training of pedagogues and future teachers. Within the new 2007-2013 programming period the following national projects (directly assigned) and projects responding to calls that are relevant to VET have been already launched:

- national project (No. OPV/K/RKZ/NP/2008-2) within Priority Axes 2 and 4,

Measures 2.1 and 4.2, aimed at further training of teachers of primary and secondary education in the subject Informatics (published on 17th March 2008);

- call within Priority Axe 1, Measure 1.1, aimed at designing and implementing projects to support development of students' key competences and usage of new learning materials (e.g. development of school educational programmes, innovation of methods and forms of instruction) at secondary schools (published on 11th March 2008);
- call within Priority Axe 4, Measure 4.1 "Transformation of the traditional school into a modern one for the Bratislava Region, aimed at designing and implementing projects to support development of students' key competences and usage of new learning materials (e.g. the development of school educational programmes, innovation of methods and forms of instruction) at secondary schools in the Bratislava Region (published on 11th March 2008).

- Key actors involved

- The Ministry of Education and attached to the ministry established
 - Accreditation Board in charge of accrediting educational programmes for in-service training of pedagogues in a career system; and
 - unit in charge of collecting and registering credits received by pedagogues within in-service training;
- Educational institutions (higher education institutions, in-service training institutions directly managed by the Ministry of Education and other ministries);
- School establishers;
- Schools and school establishments.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

No evaluation studies have been elaborated so far. Nevertheless, it is expected that measures will result in improving the quality of training, increasing flexibility and improving the status of pedagogues, and increasing the attractiveness of the profession.

- Indicators of success

- Professional standards of pedagogues developed;
- System of continuing training of pedagogues developed;
- Credit system developed;
- New system of differentiated remuneration of pedagogues developed;
- Act on the status of pedagogues and regulation of the government on the catalogue of professional standards of pedagogues adopted.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

According to the draft version of the act on the status of pedagogues a special regulation of the government should be elaborated to overcome any discrepancies between standards of teacher training at universities, standards of continuing professional development and standards of secondary education of pedagogical staff (kindergarten staff and diverse auxiliary staff). Accreditation of education and training within all aforementioned segments should be based on harmonised standards.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

The policy has not been implemented yet. There are some important decisions that are still waiting to be taken:

- Will the provision of continuing training become strictly demand-driven and not supply-driven?
 - Will it be based on a guaranteed amount of training hours per year?
- What issues remain to be addressed?

It can be expected that providers of in-service training will insist on at least partial exclusivity of their services. The Rectors' Conference questioned exactly this issue and insisted on explicit opening the access to continuing professional development of teachers for higher education institutions on equal base with current in-service institutions maintained by the Ministry of Education. In fact, the problem is much more complex and a crucial decision to be met is the following:

It must be decided whether attesting of pedagogical staff within continuing professional development should be based on respective professional standards, i.e. achieving performance standards regardless forms and extension of prior in-service training. In case credits of in-service training will become obligatory in a large extent and not replaceable by proves of professionalism, VET schools will suffer seriously, as an inflow of experienced professionals into VET schools could be hampered.

5. Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

5.1. National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market (LM)

In Slovakia IVET system is dominantly school-based. Practical training is traditionally offered within school premises or specific educational establishments. Secondary vocational schools originally maintained by respective sectors of national economy are now treated as other secondary schools in the region. Their institutional links to enterprises interrupted in the early 1990s are maintained on personal basis rather than on institutional basis and the number of students trained with a clear perspective of placement in respective enterprise and sponsored or contracted by such an enterprise is marginal. Within the whole 1990s secondary vocational schools originally designed for preparation for blue-collar professions evolved closer to secondary vocational schools aiming to offer not just an ISCED 3C certificate of apprenticeship but also ISCED 3A "maturita" certificate entitling for a better paid working position in public sphere and for entering higher education. This process boosted by a demographic decline and the lost of attractiveness of some professions resulted in merging of different types of VET schools and emerging of numbers of associated secondary schools and joined secondary schools. In May 2008 a new Education Act abandoned the two-tier VET system as outdated. Since September 2008 with coming the new act in force only one type of VET schools offering an appropriate mix of ISCED 3A and ISCED 3C studies responding to both, demand of students and demand of the labour market, will exist. In the 2002-2006 election period regional VET schools passed out of the mind of government and reformers. Reform intentions and principles of new legislation announced at the 2001 national VET conference have remained forgotten. The more intensively emerged need for

VET reforms in 2007 fuelled by the loudly expressed dissatisfaction of businesses with labour force supply led the Ministry of Education to initiation of elaboration of four important strategy papers by the State Institute of Vocational Education:

- Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic, approved by the government on 6th June 2007;
- Proposal of Motivation Criteria for Participation of Entrepreneurs' Associations and Entrepreneurs in VET, adopted by the Ministry of Education on 24th September 2007;
- Proposal of the System of Coordinating VET and the Labour Market in the Slovak Republic, approved by the Ministry of Education in March 2007;
- Sectoral Analysis of Employers' Needs and Graduates' Readiness to Enter Labour Market in the Slovak Republic, adopted by the Ministry of Education on 21st August 2007.

Furthermore, in autumn 2007 a very positive agreement was reached between the government and businesses resulting in reshaping the new Education Act and a decision to prepare a dedicated act on VET. Through this hopefully, a way is paved for elaboration of the act allowing for coherence in policies, as VET is expected to come out of traditional boundaries of regional school system. Nevertheless, the crucial point remains unclear – what instruments will be finally selected to meet labour market needs without neglecting desires of students and their parents. Some businesses have already expressed wishes to induce hard regulations of the inflow of non-academically oriented students into secondary schools. Some employers believe that a reduction of a number of places in grammar schools and ISCED 3A VET programmes could guarantee a supply of lacking ISCED 3C graduates demanded by the automotive industry, electronic plants and construction. A proposal suggested by an influential member of parliament to administratively regulate an inflow of students into secondary schools has been accepted and embedded into the new Education Act approved by the parliament. It must be hoped that despite strong lobbying more efficient instruments will be finally stressed by the new act on VET, such as the improvement of career guidance and counselling, introduction of fiscal incentives for enterprises taking care of preparation of new labour force meeting their demand, and a wide support for anticipation of skill needs to offer schools an indication of future labour market needs and time to adjust to it.

ESF is a very promising resource for implementation policies strengthening the links between VET and the labour market, as these policies are in close relation with employability increase. In the 2004-2006 programming period two projects were introduced

- improving the quality of VET at the ISCED 3C level (see section 5.2.1.);
- cooperation between schools and car producers initiated by the Minister of Education from 29th March 2007 aimed at development of key competences and new VET programmes for automotive industry.

5.2. Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsive to labour market needs

5.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

On 21st December 2001 the Ministry of Education approved the Principles of the Establishment, Organisation, and Activity of Expert Commissions and Co-ordinating Council for Vocational Education and Training at Secondary Specialised Schools, Secondary Vocational Schools and Associated Secondary Schools in the Slovak Republic, coming into force since 1st January 2002.

The old regulation has been replaced in order to strengthen participation of employers and trade unions in curriculum development in VET schools. There are 15 expert commissions operating at the State Institute of Vocational Education, which included 299 experts in 2007. The highest number of 149 experts representing 49.83% of all experts were pedagogues

from VET schools. Compared to the past, the number of employers' representatives increased to 31 (10.37%), and the number of representatives of employers associations, federations, chambers, and guilds increased to 48 (16.05%). Five experts (1.67%) came from trade unions. Participation of employers and trade unions was however based on individual interest rather than on institutionally backed and evidence based interest. It is hoped the proximity effect will help increase the influence of social partners in the process of development of school educational programmes, which will become valid since September 2008 and where regional players might find more room and an easier way to assert their needs. These school educational programmes must stick to respective state educational programmes leaving room for adjustment of curricula according to specific needs of a school and region.

In the process of development of state educational programmes the DACUM (abbreviation for Developing a Curriculum) method to carry out occupational analysis using team work of experienced specialists guided by a facilitator was used within the ESF SOP Human Resources project Improving Quality of Vocational Education and Training in the Slovak Republic at ISCED 3C level (September 2005 – December 2007). This project performed by the State Institute of Vocational Education finally resulted in development of 15 ISCED 3C state educational programmes reflecting the needs and requirements of entrepreneurial sphere based on a questionnaire survey carried out in selected regions targeted on specific employers.

Recent policies to involve social partners and/or respective companies in strengthening VET provision were based solely on calls to cooperate. No incentives to support those willing and able to cooperate, and to make difference between them and free riders were set, and all proposals, such as establishment of levy type VET fund proposed in 1990s, introduction of tax based incentives proposed in 2000s were abandoned. As a consequence there is a lack of evidence and a lack of genuine experts studying topic from respective social partners' point of view. Only financially strong enterprises and booming sectors have got resources to run skill needs and occupation needs studies. Significantly, 72% enterprises declared no need to assess CVET needs in 2003 (highest share in EU) according to CVTS3 survey and only 3.9% of adults aged 15 to 64 participated in 2007 in education and training (the lowest number within EU25 far below EU benchmark 12.5%), according to Eurostat.

A decentralisation reform made self-governing regions responsible for networks of schools and regional development. As strategies of regional development are highly relevant for secondary VET, it is very positive that regions made use of the unique opportunity to draw from EU funds for elaboration of analyses and strategy papers. Several examples of strategic development papers assessing labour market needs and proposing changes in the provision of VET, e.g. in the Bratislava Region, just to name one of very good documents, elaborated within the ESF (see example of policy below), have been already elaborated by regions. It is again up to the new act on VET to propose instruments including fiscal ones for stimulations targeted actions and coherence in measures within regional development policies. Not just schools, employment and counselling services must be improved, but also economic policies adjusted to the potential of respective regions and to the interests of their inhabitants. Slovakia has attracted many investors in assembling businesses by offering a pro-entrepreneurial climate and a low wage accepting labour force, however disregarding the inhabitants' wishes and effects of an open EU labour market. As a consequence, enterprises face a lack of labour force and the country loss of production, as about 10% of the labour force of Slovakia is employed abroad, according to estimation of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. Moreover, high over-qualification is signalled among people working abroad and partly also in newly opened assembling plants mushrooming in the country. It is not yet clear whether the government will succeed in attracting investors interested in more sophisticated production in order to address the over-qualification. Furthermore, it is not clear to what extent young people working in other EU countries will return back and whether the policy to motivate them to come back currently under debate at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family will work.

5.2.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Establishment of centres of VET in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region

The policy is based on the ESF project "Centres for VET and information - a base for adjusting education to labour market requirements" (1st June 2006 to 30th September 2007).

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The need for establishing "Centres for VET and information" resulted from the increased requirements for effective communication with employers, more flexible responding of VET to labour market needs, and promoting innovations in study and training branches. Centres should be established at selected secondary VET schools covering six sectors - construction, electrical engineering, engineering, food processing, retail and services, and chemistry.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main aim of the project is to establish six centres for VET and information in the Bratislava Region, covering six sectors.

The project's main objectives include:

- initiating cooperation with employers within six sectoral partnerships in development of new educational programmes;
- developing and piloting six tailor-made retraining courses for school graduates;
- training of teachers in designing and management of continuing training programmes;
- an analysis of current situation in VET at secondary schools in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region by respective sectors;
- a survey on employers' requirements on qualified labour force.

The project's measurable targets will be related to the centres' tasks. The centres' tasks shall include e.g.:

- Collecting information on respective groups of study and training branches provided within the region, including lists of specialisations and sub-specialisations, number of students, etc.;
- Communicating with employers and potential investors, neighbouring regions and foreign partners within the sector;
- Collecting information and setting up own libraries and networks of consultants;
- Monitoring new trends in technology in respective branches, communicating with schools and the State Institute of Vocational Education concerning the content of education;
- Monitoring the situation in qualification of teachers and qualified teaching within vocational subjects and practical training;
- Communicating with authors of legislative regulations and commenting on new drafts of laws, decrees, etc.;
- Communicating with the regional labour office and monitoring the situation in unemployment of graduates from respective schools, cooperating with the State Institute of Vocational Education in making changes in composition of study and training branches, and adjusting the content of education to employers' requirements;

- Working on proposals for new professions that could be generated by the labour market in 5 to 10 years, collecting project ideas for new curricula;
- Cooperating with employers and other entities in development of standards for materials and technology equipment in individual branches, as well as with authors of textbooks, teaching/learning aids, etc.;
- Coordinating supply of educational services to the wide public, in particular to firms and enterprises in need of training or retraining their employees;
- Participating in projects, in particular within ESF;
- Creating and maintaining a database of graduates (monitoring their situation on the labour market), as well as partner organisations and firms in a respective sector;
- Improving public relations, promoting respective study and training branches, etc.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

- 30 teachers in total in six centres trained in designing and management of continuing training programmes;
- 48 graduates participating at tailor-made retraining courses (plus 150 graduates trained 2 years after project's closing);
- 1 000 students of secondary VET schools indirectly affected by modernised curricula (2 years after project's closing).

- Status of implementation

The ESF project has been completed, however the policy is continuing as being implemented by the self-governing region.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The project has been implemented in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

The demand-driven project has been carried out within the European Social Fund, Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, Priority 2 "The development of lifelong learning and the support for research and development in the context of human resources quality improvement", Measure 2.1 "Stimulating and improving the provision of education relevant to employers and businesses".

The project is in concord with VET and lifelong learning policies, and it contributes to promoting partnership in VET policy.

- Key actors involved

The ESF project has been implemented by the Regional School Office (state administration) in cooperation with the Bratislava Self-Governing Region and six VET schools (pilot centres). Currently, the self-governing region is the main key actor orchestrating cooperation of all other players including employers.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

An analysis of current situation in VET at secondary schools in the Bratislava Self-

Governing Region and a survey on employers' requirements on qualified labour force were carried out in order to identify appropriate pilot centres and to specify their tasks. Assessment of impact was based on checking fulfilment of the tasks above, and with regard to indicators of success listed below. No evaluation study has been elaborated so far, however, impact assessment will be provided within the Self-Governing Region procedure of monitoring policies.

- Indicators of success

- Six centres for VET and information established;
- Six sectoral partnerships established;
- Number of teachers trained in designing and management of continuing training programmes: 30;
- Number of graduates completing tailor-made retraining courses: 48.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

The results of the analysis of current situation in VET and of a survey on employers' requirements were used in elaboration of the strategy paper for optimisation of study and training branches in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region. Furthermore, a similar policy should be implemented in all regions in Slovakia, as visible from the draft legislative intentions of the new act on VET. The act shall stipulate criteria for "upgrading" regular school establishment to regional Centre of VET.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Cooperation with employers is crucial for aligning education with labour market needs. 120 employers information points were envisaged within the project. The experience shows that collecting information from employers will require a period of mutual training. More time is needed to stabilise information flow and to achieve reliable and valid data.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Financing of centres may appear a weak point of the policy. It is expected that this issue will be clarified by the new act on VET, which is expected to deal with this topic nation-wide.

Development of methodology to collect data on skill needs and other labour market linking to education relevant data is also an issue to be addressed nation-wide.

5.3 Integrating learning with working

5.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

There is no typical apprenticeship system in Slovakia. All young people regardless whether they attend grammar school or some of VET schools are students (pupils), according to legislation. Establishment of the so-called complex secondary vocational schools was promoted before 1989 in order to offer practical training directly in schools as much as possible. Of course, in some professions practical training in workplace is inevitable, but

Slovak VET is dominantly school based. Promotion of workplace learning started to emerge only recently as a consequence of a lack of labour force and dissatisfaction of employers with school graduates. In the 1990s and early 2000s employers were very rarely interested in investing in workplace learning of IVET students. Of course employers are more prone to invest in workplace learning of employers, but due to the character of enterprises and lack of disposable means in many firms a share of adults in CVET is among the lowest in the EU and the need to train employees is perceived as not important (see 5.2.1.).

Firms are encouraged to training by a single measure, as education and training of employees and education of secondary vocational school students are recognised as tax deductible expenses according to §19(2c) of Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on income tax, as amended. With regard to students the stipulation is however very narrow, as substitution of mandatory costs of state is not possible, and as a consequence, tax authorities might not accept such an item provided there are doubts about additionality of respective training. In practice there are three alternatives for those interested in provision of workplace training for IVET students.

A private firm may establish a private school and/or a workplace of practical training and receive co-financing from the state budget based on per capita contribution equal to public institution. Nevertheless, enterprises do not consider such approach cost effective and there is only one enterprise maintaining a private school - a Private Secondary Vocational School of Metallurgy maintained by the metallurgical company Železiarne Podbrezová, a.s.

Profitable enterprises facing a lack of labour force, e.g. Volkswagen or U.S. Steel, are positive towards investment in practical training regardless whether it is from profit money or in a form of tax deductibles. These large companies are also positive towards provision of training in their own facilities. Some companies are open to provision of workplace training in case of productive results (e.g. in service sector) as the costs of workplace training are covered by earnings. Workplace learning is also expected within training targeted on staff of newly opened plants of strategic investors, e.g. PSA Slovakia, s.r.o., received SKK 111 237 475, and KIA Motors Slovakia, s.r.o., SKK 153 147 236 for training from the state aid for large investors earmarked to them by public employment services, just to name the most important cases.

All proposals to stimulate workplace learning within general policies to stimulate co-financing VET by employers were rejected as creating space for inefficient allocation of means. The low 19% corporate tax has been considered a sufficient stimulus for efficient investment in training until 2008 (see section 6.3.1.).

Furthermore, it is expected that the act on VET will also promote workplace learning by other than financial instruments by creation of environment that is positive towards close cooperation between schools and businesses. Although there have been no top-down policies of this kind introduced yet, positive examples come also from local/regional initiatives where human resource development sensitive investors met human resource development authorities (see the example of policy below in section 5.4.2.).

Learning and working integrating policy aimed at school graduates lacking skills required at workplace is coming also from employment services, as visible from the example below.

5.3.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Graduates of secondary schools practice in a workplace

The policy was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, valid since 1st February 2004 and revised by amendment of this act valid since 1st May 2008.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Unemployment of young people is a long-term problem, within which two groups at risk are identified

- low educated and non-qualified (very often Roma) who need to gain qualification to be able to assert on the labour market;
- graduates of secondary schools unable to find a job due to a mismatch in qualification or due to a lack of practice in case employers are looking for experienced staff.

The second group is targeted by this policy. Interested graduates are placed into workplaces based on an agreement between employer and public employment services.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main objective is to develop employment skills and specific vocational skills attractive for employers.

A graduate is expected to work 20 hours weekly for six months, receiving remuneration which has raised from the initial SKK 1 500 to SKK 1 700 etc., up to SKK 5 130 per month since May 2008. After finishing practice a graduate receives a certificate about practice; his/her participation at work is not considered employment but a workplace learning period. Placement of graduates is considered an ultimate goal of the policy however it is impossible to check the efficiency of the tool individually. Only aggregate data is available, without specific analyses.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Unemployed graduates of schools up to 2 years after completing secondary or tertiary education and below 25 years of age registered at offices of labour.

- Status of implementation

Policy is being implemented since 2004, according to §51 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services.

Table 16

Number of graduates placed in graduate's practice in 2004-2007

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | Total |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| Number of enrolled | 14 462 | 24 838 | 14 503 | 8 937 | 62 740 |

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

A number of enrolled decreased with decreasing unemployment and increasing job creation.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide, regionally administered.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is implemented within a cluster of tools of active labour market policy instruments stipulated by the act on employment services.

- Key actors involved

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affair and Family;
- Centre of Labour, Social Affair and Family;
- Offices of Labour, Social Affair and Family.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

No specific evaluation studies were conducted as the measure is not considered problematic in essence. Only 8% of graduates are registered with labour offices more than 12 months and therefore no specific evaluations were conducted. On the other hand, the latest increase in remuneration of graduates, which is equal to subsistence minimum, might prove counterproductive in the future.

- Indicators of success;

No specific indicators of success have been set.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Expectations as well as results are taken into account within elaboration of the Individual Action Plan of respective unemployed. Alternative tools might be applied if graduate's practice is not considered appropriate. Currently, almost all graduates willing to do so are enrolled in this policy. Alternatively they may be placed in retraining (12% of all unemployed enrolled in retraining) or given a contribution to start their own business (11% of all unemployed affected by this tool). Some graduates are employed due to specific contribution given to employers for employing disadvantaged job seekers (10% of all affected unemployed are graduates).

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Graduates considered remuneration too low not understanding that it was intended to be a contribution to cover their costs related to workplace learning opportunity. These complaints were accepted by decision makers and the financial contribution was made equal to the minimum subsistence cost.

Labour offices wanted employers to plan working activities equally distributed among all working days, and they explicitly refused to accept work-sheets for 8 hours per day to prevent from concentration of required work load of 20 hours in few days. In practice however it is impossible to check whether work-sheets correspond with reality.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

20 working hours per week for SKK 5 130 net, which is over SKK 10 000 net for full employment, might be considered a better choice than direct entering employment, although graduates cannot be placed into graduate's practice for the second time as the tool might discourage graduates to leave this practice before six months period to enter a real working position. Thus, evaluation of the policy will be needed to prevent from this effect. Furthermore, a study aimed at identification specific and non-specific skills gained within graduate's practice might offer a valuable feedback for adjusting IVET to labour market needs. In the future graduate's practice should be aimed at developing specific skills.

5.4. Integrating skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision

5.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

In order to integrate skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision, skills and competence-based vocabulary must be agreed first. While employers are usually able to speak about tasks to be mastered within a working process and about occupations needed, educators prefer to speak about a content being taught. A shift from content towards outcome based vocabulary initiated among educators in the early 1990s was boosted within IVET by setting the Standard of Secondary Vocational Education and Training in the Slovak Republic elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education in 2002, followed by elaboration of the manual for developing secondary VET curriculum in 2003 and the Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic, approved by the government in 2007. The 2008 Education Act introduced curricular reform based on 20 VET ISCED 3A and 15 ISCED 3C state curricula, which offer a framework for decentralised curriculum development - the development of individual school curriculum adjusted to regional/local needs. One of the most important tasks is to reflect skill and competence needs of the labour market within the process of elaboration of school curriculum. In order to be able to do this, labour market needs must be identified appropriately and message coming from employers translated into the vocabulary of skills and competences.

The Ministry of Education supported involvement of businesses and employers in cooperation with VET (see also section 5.2.) by reconstruction of sectoral expert commissions established at the State Institute of Vocational Education permanently reviewing curricula (2001), by implementation of the DACUM method in involving employers in curriculum development (2005) and also by attracting employers' representatives to participate in school leaving examinations strengthened by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 510/2004 Coll. on school leaving examinations. All these positive activities however did not represent a systemic change in cooperation, as cooperation was dominantly based on activities of individual enthusiasts. For companies and employers used to recruit from a mass of skilled and experienced unemployed during the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, a new situation emerged only with lack of labour force caused by booming economy and migration of workers into EU. Employers suddenly facing problems in recruiting workers started to analyse the labour market including supply of VET graduates and to press schools to follow their needs.

Pushed by the urgency of solving the problem many bodies started to perform some ad hoc surveys with different methodological quality:

- Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Žilina appointed to do so by national headquarter after debate with the Minister of Education;
- Self-governing regions and large cities within work on their development plans;
- Sectoral employers' bodies, e.g. Automotive Industry Association of Slovakia with regard to the estimation of numbers of missing professions;
- ESF learning regions project coordinators with regard to elaboration of learning regions plans.

Lacking labour force resulted in immediate grasping of importance of systemic change which was promoted by VET experts for a long time, however not seen so much urgent by politicians and decision makers until then. A systemic support for cooperation and making VET provision responsive to labour market needs is now expected from the act on VET to be submitted to the government in November 2008, which should establish an institutional infrastructure for such cooperation (see also section 6.2.1.). Draft version of this act is very promising, nevertheless there is an important problem to address - lacking experience in identifying labour market needs as proved by development in 2006-2008.

Following 2006 Government Manifesto declaring the will to "provide for the coordination of vocational education and the labour market" the Ministry of Education assigned i.a. the State Institute of Vocational Education with two following tasks:

- No 1.6 Elaborate a proposal of the system of coordinating VET and the labour market;
- No 1.12 Monitoring vocational education from the long-term labour market needs point of view, educational offer of schools, development of interest in training in VET schools and of situation and possibilities in cooperation between labour market institutions and the school system, employers' requirements and needs concerning preparation of graduates.

The second task was not satisfactorily fulfilled due to lack of expertise. In the document the Proposal of the System of Coordinating VET and the Labour Market, approved by the Ministry of Education in March 2007, the State Institute of Vocational Education proposed to revive and create VET councils (now it is incorporated into draft of act on VET together with creation of sectoral/regional Centres of VET all involved in collecting and analysing VET and labour market data). The document also explicitly mentioned need of forecasting of "changing qualification needs ... and ... analysis of professions/occupations..." and in further document approved by the Ministry of Education in September 2007 the State Institute of Vocational Education suggested to develop in cooperation with public employment service institutions of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family a model of long-term forecasting of labour market needs for VET. No common action was however taken and the two sectors continued to address the issue from their specific points of view.

A survey carried by the State Institute of Vocational Education focused "on key knowledge, skills and competences of future graduates of secondary VET schools" and therefore its 2007 "Sectoral Analysis of Employers' Needs and Graduates' Readiness to Enter Labour Market in the Slovak Republic" was limited only to IVET graduates.

Institute for Labour and Family Studies conducted a sociological employer survey (with a sample of 260 entities) to study vacancies and mismatch between requirements of employers and offer of job seekers. Analysis was aimed dominantly on identification the missing qualifications and occupations according to ISCO and only partly on identification the skills and competences.

2004-2007 ESF project Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the Labour Market declared among its objectives "creating and implementing a system for monitoring, research and design of educational needs, derived from technologies applied in individual sectors of the economy". In contrast to original expectations project contributed to identification of future policies and recommendations concerning further research in the field rather than to development of relevant know-how. It is very likely that there were no experts available for management of this education sector project for both forecasting of skills needs based on macroeconomic model and surprisingly also for anticipation of skill needs based on questionnaires and/or similar soft techniques. In parallel European Social Fund SOP Human Resources measure 3.3.B has been identified in support of early skills recognition and identification of labour market needs and again managing authority was not able to use resources for this purpose. Finally there were no activities taken within these measures, apparently due to missing expert capacities.

Although Institute of Economic Research of the Slovak Academy of Sciences has developed an econometric model based on application of the Error Correction Models (ECM) methodology, it is not focusing on detailed labour market needs development. However, the institute would be able to do forecasting of skills need and making use of its own macroeconomic forecasting system also in this field and/or participate on development/implementation of European forecasting system on employment trends promoted by Skillsnet and Council (education). Nevertheless, involvement of additional experts with competitive salaries is a precondition for any further progress in this field. Similarly revitalisation of research capacities is inevitable also with regard to anticipation of skills needs, where again Skillsnet project of Cedefop could offer support for development of paneuropean know-how in order to secure valid data collection in the future. No doubt, there will be a demand for know-how in enterprise surveying fuelled by future act on VET and by interests of regions, industrial/sectoral players already conducting non-standard surveys. At the same time, policy makers and many employers are under the pressure right now and immediate action is demanded rather than a long lasting research applicable in far future.

This might result in impatience counterproductive to intentions to boost serious research efforts.

5.4.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Cooperation among local/regional authority, educational institutions and the world of work – the case of Continental, s.r.o., Zvolen

The policy has been implemented since 2006.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

During a meeting of employers and VET schools establisher in Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region a need of a closer cooperation of employers and VET schools have been intensively mentioned. Cooperation should not focus on graduates training – qualified labour force only, but it should address also cooperation in innovations of study specialisations and conditions for practical training of VET schools students. One of the employers, Continental Automotive Systems s.r.o., Zvolen has clearly declared the needs to have employees, whose qualification is matching European standard. It has also declared its willingness to actively participate in such training.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

During the first negotiations the following specific aims have been agreed upon:

- develop a new competence profile of the studies in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering so that knowledge and skills of a graduate are matching the level of a graduate from the same specialisation in Germany and the Netherlands;
- develop a system of practical training of students from the Associated Secondary School (ASS) in Zvolen in the company Continental Automotive Systems s.r.o., Zvolen;
- identify the VET study branches the school does not have material conditions for; Continental Automotive Systems s.r.o. may fill in this gap with specialised classrooms.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

- Secondary VET students of ASS in Zvolen;
- Teachers of specialised subjects at ASS;
- Parents.

- Status of implementation

Project is planned to run 3 years. Project piloting was completed in June 2008 with corrections being adopted; this process has resulted in extending this project to another school – ASS Detva.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

It is an example of regional policy in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region.

- Principles (to be) applied (quality assurance; recognition and mobility; creating equivalences across different education and training pathways, learning outcomes approach)

This approach is matching the VET development strategy of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region and it has been approved by its members of regional parliament in 2006. Partial outputs of the project have been reflected in the documents that are under preparation: Regional innovation strategy of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region (2008) and the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region development programme (2008) for VET on ISCED 3A and 3C levels.

- Key actors involved

- Continental Automotive Systems s.r.o.;
- Associated Secondary School Zvolen;
- Regional self-governing authority: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region – Department of Lifelong Learning.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

- Curricula have been adjusted according to employers' needs;
- In the 2006/2007 school year, 37 students of two specialisations carried out their practical training in Continental;
- In 2007 specialised classrooms for teaching automation and hydraulics have been set up in Continental premises;
- A coordinated approach of the school and Continental as for addressing basic school leavers and their parents has been applied in the 2007/2008 school year;
- Conditions for extended cooperation in 2008/2009 have been achieved.

- Indicators of success;

All ASS graduates from mechanical engineering and electrical engineering, who expressed interest to work in Continental, have been admitted. This decreased the unemployment rate of graduates.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

After project evaluation in 2009, dissemination of project results is expected also in other regions and sectors.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Negative sentiment of parents rising from recent times when mechanical engineering production has been drastically reduced and demand for work force in this sector was minimal, has been overcome.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Elaborate and implement a system of lifelong career.

6. Governance and funding

6.1. National policy context on VET governance and funding

Eight self-governing regions were assigned responsibility for the establishment of regional public schools since 1st July 2002. Since then all secondary schools including VET schools, except private, church affiliated and a marginal number of state schools of over-regional focus, have been maintained by a single self-governing body. This happened for the first time as a result of decentralisation reform starting with creation of self-governing bodies, followed by redefinition of responsibilities between the state and self-governing administrations, and completed by fiscal decentralisation, which came into force on 1st January 2005.

Although the regions can identify better the priorities and prevent from misallocations of means, it is an open question, whether this system of financing sufficiently stimulates local players to efficient allocation of means. Municipalities and self-governing regions substantially depend on the means transferred from centrally collected taxes, as the share of their own means from local taxes and fees in their budgets is marginal. Thus, cost-saving effect usually resulting from accouplement between local collecting and local spending of means is not fully present, and cost benefits analysis in full extent is not applied in local/regional decision making.

The Policy Statement of the Government of the SR 4th November 2002 announced introduction of financing education based on per capita “normatives”. It reflected a population decline and reluctance of authorities to decide on reduction of numbers of schools and study programmes. The dominant priority of this reform was aimed at “imposing hard fiscal restraint on educational institutions”, as repeatedly stressed by the Ministry of Finance, and the “rationalisation of the school network in connection with the decentralisation reform”, as stressed e.g. within the National Action Plan of Employment for 2002 and 2003, one of crucial documents of that times. It was aimed at making education and training systems harmonised with the European employment strategy and paving the way for smooth accession of Slovakia into the EU. Later this document also formed a base for development of ESF programming documents.

Although conditions for increasing the accountability of individual schools and school establishments were created, and per capita financing significantly increased the transparency in allocation of means, the reform have not contributed to improvement of human resource development policies. Instead of this it strengthened a fight of directors of schools to attract pupils and students to enter their schools regardless other factors. The positive result of the policy was the increased cost effectiveness of public service in education visible in closing/merging of public schools. At the same time, however a number of private schools significantly increased benefiting from generous funding from public sources and in fact often replacing closed schools and consuming public means under a different label (see Table 17 below). Positive effects of decentralisation and per capita funding were harmed by a failure to introduce hard quality checking to prevent deterioration of quality of graduates and long lasting low investment in education in general – Slovakia is at the bottom of the EU in share of investment in educational institutions to GDP.

Fiscal pressure on the education sector is in a remarkable contrast with generous funding of administration resulting from the decentralisation reform. 88.6% of all municipalities

comprising together only 30.5% of all inhabitants are very tiny, with less than 2 000 inhabitants each, and consequently with too high share of administrative costs and a low share of disposable means for execution of municipal policies. Both extreme fragmentation of municipalities and duality in management on a regional level, where self-governing bodies and some sectoral state administration bodies (including education) act in parallel, contribute to problematic efficiency and effectiveness of governance.

Slovakia is still in the process of decentralisation and will have to rethink communitarian reform aimed at clustering small municipalities, and redefine power sharing in regions. It will also have to modify financing of education, in particular IVET, as the system driven by per capita funding evolved inappropriately increasing difference between competences/qualification obtained within IVET and employment chances.

6.2. Changes made to administrative/institutional structures

6.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

After the chain of changes in the responsibility towards VET since 1989, the Ministry of Education is now the national authority responsible for IVET and CVET, while the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is in charge of labour market training. Although some ministries have responsibilities towards specific CVET and the Ministry of Health is enjoying important autonomy towards IVET and CVET in health, the influence of other sectoral ministries have substantially been reduced after they were taken away responsibility to establish and maintain secondary vocational schools within their sectoral scope (Ministry of Economy - 129 schools, Ministry of Agriculture - 63 schools, Ministry of Construction - 22 schools, etc.) since 1st July 2001. Regional state authorities have transferred this responsibility to geographically identical regional self-governing regions one year later.

“Decentralisation and modernisation of public administration” was the most important reform with an impact on governance and funding secondary VET. Its concept was approved by the government in 2000. Regional parliaments and heads of eight self-governing regions were elected for the first time in December 2001 for a term of four years. Regional self-governing bodies have started to operate since 2002, and together with municipalities they started to take over responsibilities from state administration bodies. Subsequently, financing execution of these responsibilities was subject to a reform, too. A part of responsibilities called original competencies, should have been covered from the own self-government’s income, and a part, called transferred competencies, which also included secondary VET, from the in advance determined share of total person income tax. Out of personal income tax revenue, 70.3% of means from all tax payers were earmarked for municipalities, 23.5% for self-governing regions and 6.2% remained with the state as a reserve.

The responsibility for basic schools and other establishments of local importance were transferred to municipalities, and the responsibility for secondary schools, including VET schools and other establishments of regional importance, to self-governing regions. Some competences (in particular in distributing means), however, remained preserved with the state and regional school offices emerged with other newly created specialised state administration bodies in parallel to offices of self-governing regions.

Rationalisation of the school network and a pressure to increase the number of students at schools was permanently stressed in connection with decentralisation and financing the education reform. A reduction of the network of public schools has been however accompanied by the increasing number of private schools, often using facilities of abolished schools benefiting from advantageous financing of private schools compared to public schools (see table below). This can be explained by the fact, that schools are entitled to the same per capita contribution from the state (to cover current expenditures) within the same category of schools, regardless ownership. Private schools in contrast to public/state schools

are however not entitled to receive contribution borne by state or public budgets to cover their capital expenses.

Table 17

Schools and school establishments by ownership in selected years

| Schools and school establishments | 2002/2003 | 2003/2004 | 2004/2005 | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| State/public | 851 | 842 | 811 | 742 | 742 | 745 |
| Private | 69 | 75 | 83 | 152 | 168 | 180 |
| Church | 50 | 61 | 72 | 78 | 78 | 78 |
| All | 970 | 978 | 966 | 972 | 988 | 1 003 |

Source: Ministry of Education, network of schools

At the same time, regardless the aforementioned discrepancies of the decentralisation process, a very positive learning process started, within which regions gradually improved their policy making. Regional development plans offered a lot of qualitative and quantitative data and propose ambitious measures emanating real ownership; however efficiency of policies might be partly hampered by lacking expertise, in particular regarding the forecasting future regional socio-economic development and subsequently labour force skills needs. Thus, partisan policy making will be replaced by the evidence-based policy only in case the capacities and know-how for delivery of unbiased data and analyses are improved. Labour market intelligence instruments are urgently missing; no quality feedback in quantitative terms to VET schools is being offered to adjust study programmes and numbers of graduates to labour market needs.

New impulses are coming from the new Education Act valid since 1st September 2008, predominantly concerning decentralisation of curriculum development, and from the act on VET, which is under preparation. The process of establishment regional VET councils initiated in the early 2000s, slowed down in 2002-2005 and revived since 2006, will be legislatively backed by this act. Significantly, institutionally weak links between VET schools and employers are considered an issue, which needs to be urgently addressed. Decentralisation created a frame for strengthening cooperation of regional players. The act on VET envisages establishment of four-partite “regional VET councils” affiliated to self-governing regions consisting of representatives of state administration, self-governing administration, employers and representatives of trade unions and/or employees’ councils stipulating in detail responsibilities of a regional VET council. Similar four-partite body “National VET Council” is planned at the national level to cover trans-regional topics.

6.2.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Short description/title of change

Decentralisation and modernisation of public administration

The strategy paper Concept of Decentralisation and Modernisation of Public Administration was adopted by the government on 11th April 2000 and policies subsequently implemented (creation of regions in 2001, transfer of competences since 2002, fiscal decentralisation based on sharing income tax in 2005).

B. Outline of the change

- Rationale

- Strengthening subsidiarity, involvement of new actors including regional social

partners;

- VET governance needing regional focus due to disparity in regional markets and segmentation of labour market.
 - Objectives and/or measurable targets (with regard to secondary education including VET)

Reshaping the network of schools and school establishments as well as study and training branches

- to achieve more efficient allocation of means;
- to meet regional labour market demands;
- to address better the demand for educational services by students (and parents);
- modernisation of administration.
 - Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)
- Primary target groups: local/regional policy makers and administrators including directors of schools;
- Secondary target groups: teachers, parents, students.
 - Status of implementation

In progress, essentially completed in 2005, however impact assessment and further refinement is necessary.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide with a dominant impact on regions.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

It is an overarching policy that is influencing policy making in all sectors and all levels. Impact on regions and reshaping regional networks of schools and provision of study and training branches is crucial from the VET policy point of view.

- Key actors involved (with regard to secondary education including VET)
 - Ministry of Finance;
 - Ministry of Education;
 - Regional school offices (state administration);
 - Offices of regional self-government (managing schools);
 - Directors of schools.

D. Assessment of the change

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

Results of the decentralisation and modernisation reform are periodically monitored, however rather fragmented with a sectoral scope. There has been no comprehensive evaluation study conducted presenting overall impact and proposing changes. On the other hand, a very detailed analysis of social economic development was conducted within the programming documents for structural funds. Below is an example pointing to one of the crucial weaknesses of decentralisation and modernisation of public

administration reform: very little progress has been made in modernisation of public administration, as visible in particular from the weak development of eGovernance. "Informatisation of society is one of the areas, where the gap between Slovakia and EU member states is the biggest", as stated in the 2007-2013 Operational Programme Informatisation of Society dated 29th June 2007. In the assessment of progress in the implementation of the "i2010" initiative focusing on eGovernment services Slovakia ranked last but one in the EU, according to this document.

- Indicators of success

- Local/regional institutions established;
- Competences redefined and transferred to new institutions in order to strengthen subsidiarity;
- Public policy became more transparent, cost effective, efficient in programming, implementing and monitoring.

With regard to VET policy alignment of the provision of VET to labour market needs

- restructuring a network of study and training branches;
- adjusting numbers and profiles to regional needs;
- current fragmentation of policies aimed at IVET, CVET and training for the labour market replaced by the development and implementation of overarching lifelong learning policy.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Development of VET policies in coherence with other regional policies reflecting socio-economic needs of respective regions.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Although a transfer of competences from state to self-governing bodies might be considered a success, two risks are now more visible:

- "decentralisation of corruption", as indicated by Transparency International due to insufficient control mechanisms on local/regional levels, i.a. due to weak local and regional mass-media;
- expanding administration, as a consequence of the insufficient pressure on costs effectiveness at sub-national levels (see also section 6.1.);

Public administration modernisation has been insufficiently addressed, eServices development insufficiently supported, as a consequence of domination of the focus on decentralisation and creation of new administration, which was politically much more attractive to political parties than targeted efforts for efficiency and effectiveness of public administration.

With regard to VET policy, the dominant instrument - per capita funding - contributed to the malformation of the VET system, as no other financial instrument has been introduced. Both tax incentives and establishment of levies-based fund were rejected by governments pushing employers to invest in VET from profit money. This contributed to under-financing of VET. Furthermore, no correctives were implemented to prevent from an outflow from ISCED 3C programmes to ISCED 3A programmes. As a consequence of insufficient quality checking of graduates, grammar schools and ISCED 3A programmes of VET schools attractive for parents and students expanded disproportionately, lowering quality standards of graduates.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

With regard to results of decentralisation

- too extensive administration (a dual system of state and self-governing offices) with a risk of overlapping;
- too many representatives (local self-government, regional self-government) - 5 communal deputies per 1 000 inhabitants.

With regard to modernisation

- substantial improvement of eGovernance and provision of eservices.

With regard to VET policy

- rethinking financing VET in order to stimulate human resource development instead of plain reduction of expenditures in public education:
- per capita funding should be refined, as unified normatives for various VET programmes fully disregarding their cost demandness are not tenable without fiscal incentives to employers to co-finance VET;
- stimulating employers to invest in VET by fiscal incentives;
- strengthening legal links between employers and students trained for them, including wider support of financial benefits for students.

6.3. Changes made to funding arrangements for VET

6.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Although national authorities have declared a commitment in policy documents (National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic) to increase public expenditure on education to a minimum of 5% until 2006 and to a minimum of 6% until 2010, this policy was revised under the priority to reduce the state budget deficit.

Table 18

Expenditure on education* in % of GDP and in % of total public expenditures

| | 1995 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007** |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| % of GDP | 4.75 | 4.17 | 4.17 | 4.03 | 4.15 | 4.15 | 3.89 |
| % of total public expenditure | 9.76 | 9.70 | 9.90 | 10.00 | 10.58 | 10.80 | 10.90 |

Source: Ministry of Finance, submitted on request for purposes of this report

* all expenditures of the government, of municipalities and self-governing regions, including private sources of regional schooling; expenditures of private higher education institutions are not included (they are not available)

** preliminary data

Despite the share in total public expenditure has increased to 10.90% in 2007 compared to 9.7% in 2002, investment in percentage of GDP is further decreasing. Moreover, indicative state budget proposal for three consecutive years does not suggest any increasing continuing in prudent fiscal policy complying with the Convergence Programme recently updated (November 2007). Thus, macroeconomic stability allowing for joining eurozone in January 2009 has its shadow face and respectable growth of GDP (Slovakia is among top countries in the EU) is in huge contrast with disproportionally low investment in education (3.85% GDP compared to 5.03% in EU27, 2005 Eurostat Spending on Human Resources indicator). The decline visible in the table, 3.89% in 2007 compared to 4.17% in 2002 (Ministry of Finance data) is projected to continue as the consequence of population decline, as financing education is based on per capita principle and only a modest increase in per capita “normatives” is incalculated.

Financing regional schooling including IVET in 1990s was based on estimation of school needs corrected by limits of the state budget; allocation was based on negotiation between relevant players. The system was sensitive to lobbying, although many transparency-

increasing features were gradually introduced and authorities gradually preferred at least partially allocation based on some algorithm.

In the 2000s, within the decentralisation efforts setting a simple mechanism of allocation means from top level became inevitable. In 2001, “normatives” were for the first time set, however not per capita as originally envisaged, but “per class” to protect many small schools unable to survive under new regulation.

A reform of financing primary and secondary education based on per capita funding was finally implemented by Act No. 597/2003 Coll. coming in force since 1st January 2004. According to this reform current expenditures normatives are set for categories of schools equally, regardless the ownership (i.e. also for private and church affiliated schools in the same amount).

Financing CVET has not been supported by a specific measure until 2008. Proposals to create a levy-type VET fund have been rejected as well as any other fiscal incentives until a recent decision of the government to support continuing professional development of selected medical staff (see Parliament Breaks a Taboo: Tax Incentives for Lifelong Learning. In: Cedefop Info 1/2008). Quite surprisingly, the Ministry of Finance changed its policy of keeping the tax system as simple as possible and therefore to reject any kind of tax incentives based policies. Firms were substantially encouraged to finance training by low corporate tax (19%), according to the Ministry of Finance, which accepted only one tax related VET incentive: VET was recognised as tax deductible expense, according to §19(2c) of Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on income tax, as amended, for employees; and for IVET students only in case of the evidence of additionality of training and prevention of double financing (i.e. that respective training went beyond curricula and therefore it did not fall under financing by contribution from the state budget).

A substantial change in financing labour market training came with accession into the EU, as since 2004 labour market training has been extensively co-financed from the ESF. Partly due to this reason public legal National Labour Office was abolished and its offices have been subordinated under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family since 2003. Concerning two labour market training relevant tools see also Priority 8 in Section 1.1. and a policy example in 5.3.2.

Further impulse might come from the act of VET, as following incentives were announced in the draft:

- direct financing based on acceptance of tax-deductible expenses, which are more widely laid down;
- indirect financing via a VET development fund earning from up to 2% tax assignation from corporate tax.

6.3.2. Examples of policy measures

| |
|---|
| <p>A. Short description/title of change</p> <p>New funding mechanisms of regional schooling including VET (implemented by Act No. 597/2003 Coll., valid since 1st January 2004, later amended and annually complemented by detailed provisions)</p> |
| <p>B. Outline of the change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale <p>Originally, financing regional schools was based on negotiation (sensitive to lobbying) in two levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - between the Ministry of Education and respective regional authorities; and subsequently - between regional authorities and respective schools; |

while lower levels always fought for ad hoc increasing of budgets in contrast to preceding year by creative and sophisticated reasoning (even regardless the reality) and upper levels always explained that increase is not possible due to a lack of means (again even regardless the reality, however indeed limited due to education unfriendly policy of government, and of course with some sensitivity to exceptions). This practice was a residuum of the command economy practice of “soft budget constraints” calculating with and in fact encouraging organisations (even commercial ones) to invent and continually demand additional resources from the state budget. It must be however stressed that Slovakia invested in education below capacity of its economy strength, as can be demonstrated by the shamefully low share of expenditures on education per capita compared to GDP per capita (see e.g. table 2.5 in the 2004 UNDP Millennium Development Goals report).

As some authorities disliked such conditions and have already developed formulae for allocation of means to increase transparency (e.g. the World Bank expert praised the allocation mechanism of Bratislava Region used in 2000s before introduction of the reform) the situation was ready for agreement on a new policy. Furthermore, discrepancies in financing schools under conditions of permanently decreasing number of students caused increase of inequality in budgeting; inefficiency in some schools and harsh insufficiency in others. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance needed to introduce restrictive fiscal policy and looked for an appropriate instrument.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main aims of the policy were to

- increase transparency in allocation of means;
- set mechanism compatible with progressing decentralisation;
- impose hard budget constraints on schools, which similarly to any other public sector organisations, were used to exceed their budgets hoping in final bailing out from the state budget;
- support establishing private and church affiliated schools (as state budget per capita contributions were set equally regardless the ownership of schools).

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

- Central, regional, local educational authorities;
- Schools.

- Status of implementation

Policy is implemented, with annual changes in setting state budget per capita contributions (per capita “normatives”).

The current expenditure normative is a sum of two normatives (wage and operational); the wage normative is the same for all schools within the same category, the range in operational normatives is in detail regulated according to specific variables (one of variables was represented by eight climate categories with different heating requirements).

The following were categories of secondary schools: grammar schools, secondary specialised schools (SSS) except those for health and arts, the latter belonging to a separate category with higher normative, conservatoires, all secondary vocational schools (SVS), centres of practical training and secondary schools for students with special needs. Hence, almost all secondary specialised schools regardless their profile and cost demands were fiscally treated equally. Similarly all SVS were also treated equally with only about 20% higher normative compared to secondary specialised schools. This classification was later a little bit changed, e.g. lower normatives were set

for secondary vocational schools not offering school based practical training, but in essence it was left up to schools to collect additional money needed in particular for better equipment. And exactly equipment and practical training varies in costs substantially. It must be noted, that even before the reform SVS were only partly financed from the state budget and therefore they had to earn some money by production and/or different way cooperation with enterprises to secure quality equipment and practical training.

In essence, low sensitivity to the difference between VET schools remained a source of permanent criticism of normatives.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

Policy was implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

Similar policy was introduced earlier in financing higher education. The policy was in line with the Ministry of Finance general policy aimed at capping public spending; known as effort to replace “soft budget constraints” by “hard budget constraints” using at that time very popular Janos Kornai explanations. The policy was also in line with the other large reform “Decentralisation and Modernisation of Public Administration” (see also section 6.2.).

- Key actors involved

- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of Education;
- Regional/local educational authorities.

D. Assessment of the change

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

No doubts

- transparency has been increased;
- regional/local authorities are served by clear mechanism, however, some reservations towards the model of fiscal decentralisation dominantly based on centrally collected personal income tax must be expressed (as discussed in section 6.1);
- number of private and church affiliated schools increased (while the number of public schools decreased however, see data in 6.2.1.); and in particular
- Maastricht criteria have been met and euro is to be introduced in Slovakia in 2009;

all that is indicating a big success, at least from the Ministry of Finance point of view.

An aforementioned positive impact of the reform is in hard contrast with the negative impact on provision of education, as the Ministry of Education failed to balance the dominant fiscal reform by educational reforms and as it failed to resist to insufficiently hard cuts in financing educational institutions in the Ministry of Finance effort to reduce public expenditures:

- Quality of education is insufficient, as also confirmed by poor results in PISA 2006 and high youth unemployment rate (20.3% compared to 15.4% of EU27 in 2007, according to Eurostat); and therefore quality assurance reform is urgently needed;

- Not per capita funding itself, but accompanying restrictive policy interrelated with this reform caused deep under-financing of schools resulting in modernisation schools deficit: Slovakia is among EU members with the lowest total public expenditure on education in a percentage of GDP (3.85% compared to 5.03% of EU27 in 2007, according to Eurostat).

- Indicators of success

No explicit indicators of success were set by the Ministry of Education, while the Ministry of Finance was clear in efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit, meet all Maastricht criteria and set the country on track to adopt euro as soon as possible.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

The policy heavily influenced networks of schools and programmes by its cost-saving “rationalisation” effect. The coherence with other policies (in particular quality management, see also part E) is more relevant here rather than integration of its outcomes into other policies.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Schools and their establishers were stimulated to cost saving measures regardless the impact on the quality of their service: The reform stimulated to maximisation of students enrolment up to the capacity of facility disregarding other factors. Schools were also stimulated to prefer demand of parents/students over the demand of employers and they tended to follow desires of former over the needs of latter. With a weak regulation of quality on output, schools disregarded the quality checking on input and accepted almost everybody to improve their budgets. Consequently to the missing counterbalancing measures, a number of graduates from ISCED 3C programmes dramatically decreased and in some professions workers are urgently missing. Replacement by graduates of schools is not expectable under current terms, as guidance and counselling is still only partly able to influence parents/students choice of schools confused by severe malformation in the labour market in 1990s.

Although financing per capita is a standard measure, implementation without other correcting measures (stronger quality management, improved career guidance and counselling, incentives for cooperation between schools and enterprises, etc.) turned this measure to an example of ill practice due to incoherence in policies. The secondary school system (including the IVET system) driven by this policy evolved inappropriately resulting in a decrease of quality of ISCED 3A education and a lack of ISCED 3C skilled workers, who are preferably demanded by currently booming sectors of economy.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Financing VET must be revisited (as expected from the Act on VET under preparation); in particular

- “normatives” should be revised in order to guarantee at least standard EU teaching/learning environment; variety of IVET programmes should be reflected within this revision;
- quality assurance must be interlinked with financing to prevent from headhunting for enrolment regardless the quality of graduates;
- fiscal incentives for co-financing VET by businesses should be introduced, in particular to better align IVET to labour market needs;

- projected gradual decline in investment in education reflecting just population decline and disregarding from a modernisation depth in education should be rethought while keeping Slovakia's Convergence Programme intention to achieve fiscal balance by 2010.

6.4. Promoting partnerships in VET policy making

6.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

With forthcoming restructuring of economy and emerging regional specificities in economy and labour market, establishment of regional VET councils increased in importance. In contrast to the early 2000s, where the establishment of the National VET Council, which had to be followed by establishment of regional councils, was top-down driven, since 2004 it has been bottom-up driven. It was a failure that during 2002 to 2005 the Ministry of Education paid low attention to building an institutional background to VET policy, which resulted in dissolution of the National VET Council and a meagre development in regions. Booming economy, increasing employment and a large migration to countries offering better paid positions resulted in a lack of labour force in almost all regions. At the same time stimulated by decentralisation of public administration, regional self-governing bodies substantially contributed to knowledge of regional needs and to elaboration of proposal for changes. Self-governing regions spontaneously supported cooperation among regional players in order to elaborate strategy papers on secondary education. A good practice example from the Žilina Self-Governing Region and the establishment of four-partite council (state administration, self-government, employers, employees) to address VET policy have been translated into a newly to be prepared act on VET, which took over the idea of four-partite "regional VET councils". A good practice example from the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, which has implemented a policy of creating regional sectoral centres of VET representing a leading force in provision of VET, innovations in support of lifelong learning and information exchange including forecasting of skill needs has also been translated into the new act on VET. Experience from the first sectoral VET reform initiated by employers in the automotive industry (see No Longer Waiting for Godot. In: Cedefop Info 3/2003) was also substantially translated into the new act on VET. It influenced the whole architecture of institutional background definition of responsibilities and sharing powers among respective players relevant for VET policies. Many ESF projects positively influenced the improvement of partnerships in VET, i.a. also with learning regions initiatives (see example of policy below). Decision of the Ministry of Education from 2007 to prepare a new act on VET complementing a new Education Act offers an excellent opportunity to address specific needs of VET. It has to be praised that the Ministry of Education followed the call of employers (among which the automotive industry was leading) to cooperate in creation of a new legislative framework for VET. It is in a huge contrast with the 2002-2005 period when cooperation between policy makers in education and employers did not go beyond supportive rhetoric. The positive change has also an important socio-economic dimension. Employers are much more interested in cooperation as a consequence of lacking labour force, which was not the case in the early 2000s with the army of skilled unemployed workers. Leaders of sectoral changes are employers' representatives coming from booming sectors, which however predominantly need ISCED 3C labour force. Thus, there is a risk of imbalance in programming VET in the future, as employers' demand might not correspond to parents' and students' interests. Furthermore, VET policies in the future will have to take into account regional disparities as some regions (eastern and south-eastern Slovakia) are lagging behind, and sectoral disparities, as some sectors are lagging behind those more rich and successful (engineering, electronics and construction).

6.4.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Short description/title of change

National programme for learning regions

The policy was approved at 10th meeting of the Ministry of Education Gremium on 15th May 2007 based on experience from pilot projects already in progress.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

There are big differences among regions in Slovakia in economic performance, employment and labour productivity. The adoption of the national programme for learning regions resulted from the strategic objective to continuously reduce differences among regions in the standard of living, while the support for education is considered one of the key factors in regions' development. Learning regions is a tool aimed at stimulating development and increasing the competitiveness of a region through involving key actors in lifelong learning.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The national programme is aimed at creating links between lifelong learning and local and regional labour market needs. The policy is including involvement of schools of all levels, institutions of continuing education, employers, self-government, professional associations and chambers, in implementation of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted in 2007. It is based on the principle of creating partner networks and developing regional innovation strategies, which should contribute to establishment of cooperation among key local and regional institutions and development of tailor-made educational programmes meeting local and regional requirements. The following specific aims were set within the programme:

- regional and local support for lifelong learning and guidance;
- increasing motivation of inhabitants to further education;
- enhancing knowledge (key competences) and the level of education in a region;
- creating links between education and labour market needs;
- increasing employment;
- structural development, mobility;
- developing learning to learn capabilities;
- increasing quality and effectiveness of education;
- securing access to education while respecting opportunities for all.

The implementation of the policy should contribute to improving quality, access and effectiveness of education and its links to the regional labour market needs, as well as to development of competences for lifelong learning.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Citizens, employers, public administration, educational institutions

- Status of implementation

The national programme for learning regions was approved on 15th May 2007. Programme coordination will be funded from the ESF sources and from the budgetary

chapter of the Ministry of Education. At the regional level, the national programme will be carried out through regional strategies of lifelong learning and ESF projects within the 2007-2013 programming period. Projects will be funded from the ESF Operational Programme Education, Priority Axe 2 "Continuing education as a tool for human resource development", Measure 2.1 "Support for continuing education". Within ESF calls learning regions will be prioritised by the Ministry of Education.

Within the 2004-2006 programming period there have been 6 pilot projects focused on learning regions carried out within the SOP Human Resources in the Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice regions, and one pilot project within SPD NUTS II Bratislava in the Bratislava Region. Out of 8 regions a pilot project has not been implemented in the Nitra Region, and implementation in the Košice Region has ended in difficulties and no positive results can be expected.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The national programme covers all 8 regions in Slovakia. At the time being, EFS pilot projects are carried out in 7 regions, however, implementation in the Košice Region has ended up in difficulties and no positive results can be expected.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/ social policy approach?

The national programme is linked to the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, as well as to the National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007-2013 adopted by the government on 6th December 2006 and its Operational Programme Education adopted by the government the same day and approved by the European Commission on 7th November 2008. Implementation of the national programme is also included among priorities of the National Reform Programme.

The current pilot projects were launched as ESF demand-driven projects within Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 "Increasing qualification and adaptability of employees and persons entering the labour market", Measure 3.2 "Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with a view to improving qualification and adaptability of employees".

- Key actors involved
- The Ministry of Education; it coordinates and provides methodological guidance for implementation of the national programme. It is responsible for publishing calls for drawing ESF funds, in which learning regions will be comprised within priority areas.
- Consortia members; consortia in respective regions were constructed with the aim to cover all stakeholders, however members of consortia differ across regions.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

The progress in pilot projects is regularly monitored and regional consortia leaders meet with the Ministry of Education at monitoring meetings to report and share experience. Evaluation study has not yet been conducted.

- Indicators of success
- Partner networks in all regions established;

- Regional innovation strategies developed;
- Participation in lifelong learning increased;
- Employment of LLL learners increased.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Experience as well as results of pilot projects will be reflected within the subsequently launched learning region programme, within which educational and employment policies must be interlinked with the overarching development policies of self-governing regions. Learning regions activities must be integrative and integrated per definition, as the policy should finally result in increased quality of labour force and increased employment based on qualified and flexible labour force.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

As dominant administrative players in the regions are offices of self-governing regions, the level of their involvement is crucial for successful progress in a region. Although desired, coordinators of projects in respective regions were not always able to establish a fruitful partnership with a self-governing region. An example of good cooperation is in particular from the Banská Bystrica Region (www.celozivotne.sk). A negative example is from the Košice Region, where the pilot project suffers from lacking cooperation among regional key players, and partly from the Bratislava Region, where development policies of self-governing region and learning region projects activities are not interlinked.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Interlinking learning region activities with self-governing region policies remains a crucial challenge for all regions; in some regions to achieve coherence in planning, in others, more advanced, in cooperation to achieve coherence in implementation of regional policies.

Experience from pilot projects is also extremely important for future

- opening the programme in the Nitra Region;
- restarting the programme in the Košice Region.

7. EU tools and geographic mobility within VET

7.1. National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and promotion of geographical mobility within VET

Although there is a political support for implementing the Copenhagen Declaration tools into the national VET system and national policies, the progress in implementation of respective tools naturally differs. The revision of National Qualification System, establishment of the National Qualification Framework and its alignment to EQF is of the highest priority among the three main EU tools. It was declared as a result of the consultation process that elaboration of NQF would require 3 to 4 years of work. This time schedule is however based on coming to an agreement between all relevant governmental bodies necessary for development of overarching system covering sub-qualifications and qualifications within all

sectors. The first stepping-stone is development of the National System of Occupations, which is already in progress based on the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services valid since May 2008. A legislative background for elaboration of NQS and NQF is expected from the act on lifelong learning. This act, which is based on policy paper the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, was originally expected in 2008. Elaboration of this act has been postponed till 2009 due to urgency to elaborate an act on VET. Thus, it is expected, that the first legislation introducing NQF will be the act on VET, while subsequent details will be elaborated within the act on lifelong learning.

There are controversial points of view among experts concerning ECVET. Although Slovakia responded positively to this initiative within the consultation process, there are doubts about the possibility to implement this tool in a short time and even about usefulness of introduction of credits in a wide scope (see also section 7.3.1.).

Slovakia was among very active countries to promote Europass; the Slovak speaking version of the Europass website has been available since 2006. Nevertheless, no supportive documents for a variety of VET programmes have been prepared since then to facilitate issuing Europass - Certificate Supplements. It is expected, that benefits of using Europass will be supported by the new act on VET, in particular with regard to mobility of trainees and graduates. Mobility of trainees is dominantly a result of respective school's attitude and activity. It is considered an opportunity to make schools more attractive for students rather than a reflection of a specific national policy.

7.2. Promoting comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF

Slovakia thoroughly works on transposition of relevant legislation and implementation of agreed measures in order to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications internationally. There are also no constraints concerning comparability of qualifications regionally, as originally unified country stick to the same patterns after decentralisation creating 8 self-governing regions. On the other hand, a lot of work must be done to overcome artificial barriers among sectors. EQF offers unique opportunity for starting serious debates about possibilities to transfer partial qualifications among sectors as well as support recognition and validation of sectoral non-formal and informal learning across sectors and about coherence in promotion of learning outcome based approach towards remodelling a qualification system. It has to be explicitly stated that initial debates have not yet been supported by decisive action of policy makers. There is no concerted pressure to implement the new paradigm in all sectors; quality of reflection of Copenhagen tools differs across sectors.

Luckily enough, a core principle immanent to all EU tools, the importance of competence/outcome based approach, has been for a long time recognised in formal education. Curricular changes since 1990s were intuitively based on such a shift. In accordance with pedagogical theories dominant in Slovakia, respective knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits were set as crucial components of all curricular documents. Later, key competences were added as an obligatory focus within the curriculum development. The Standard of Secondary VET developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education, and approved by the Ministry of Education on 10th July 2002, was based on six key competences making difference between content standards and performance standards. According to the subsequent manual for development of curricula from 2003, a graduate's profile in all VET branches had to consist of key competences, general competences and vocational competences. A curricular reform from 2008 initiated by the new Education Act and based on "Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic", approved by the government on 6th June 2007 follows the same pattern of competence-based curricula.

It is expected, that working on school curricula, which should comply with the framework set by state curriculum and at the same time to be adjusted to regional needs, will strengthen the

need for a deeper debate on identification of learning outcomes and refinement of outcomes/competence based school curriculum. Despite difference in context, conditions for acceptance of EQF and EQF format of learning outcomes were created within IVET.

Although in CVET the shift towards outcomes is also visible, it is fully up to a training provider to what extent competence based approach is stressed. The similar also applies to respective sectors regulations that reflect a shift towards outcomes and competences to different extent. Providers looking for accreditation of their programmes must follow the Ministry of Education regulation. CVET programmes submitted for accreditation according to Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Continuing Education are however less thoroughly regulated in the format of curricular documents, as in general no qualification can be obtained from such programmes. It is expected that the future act on lifelong learning will contribute to unification of accreditation and certification practice by recognition of partial qualifications based on competences acquired regardless the learning setting. It still remains open to what extent all sectors will be involved in this process. It might happen that this act will not go beyond the current practice allowing for diverse approaches in CVET programming under the responsibility of diverse state administration bodies (sectors). In such case a permeability effect expected from aligning NQS to EQF will not be achieved.

7.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Despite signing the Copenhagen Declaration in 2002 and a political support for elaboration of the National Qualification Framework compatible with EQF, respective Copenhagen priorities were not translated into the national policy, as VET policy itself remained marginalised till 2006. Since 2005, dissatisfaction of employers with disposable labour force has gradually resulted in a change in legislative plans, and the government agreed in 2007 to prepare a specific law on VET. Furthermore, more attention has started to be paid to the need for renewal of the National Qualification System, which made EQF more present in policy debates. Following the decision of the Ministry of Education from 2007 a specific ESF project aimed at the development of the National Qualification System compatible with EQF with the budget SKK 240 million is preliminary envisaged. The project has not yet been launched, partly due to the lack of expert capacities; nevertheless an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education, Academia Istropolitana, is expected to start this project in early 2009.

7.2.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Integrated System of Typal Positions - a set of information about the world of labour and methods of using the information to facilitate communication on the labour market

The project was launched at the end of 2003 based on the contract between the National Labour Office (since 20th November 2003 the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family) and Trexima, s.r.o.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Before launching this project there was no comprehensive information database on occupations, working positions or jobs available in Slovakia. The valid regulation – the Measure of the Statistical Office of the SR No. 16/2001 Coll. of the Statistical Office on the Classification of Occupations - did not include descriptions or characteristics of individual occupations. The project responded to Measure No. 14 within Pillar I of the

National Action Plan of Employment 2002-2003, which contained an explicit task “to develop descriptions of jobs and occupations within the Classification of Occupations with the aim to create a national information system of occupations as a national comprehensive communication instrument for all subjects on the labour market”.

It is up to sectoral regulations to what extent and detail job descriptions are elaborated. In some sectors, e.g. education or health they are very detailed, in other sectors they may substantially vary in individual cases.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main objectives of ISTP are as follows:

- contribute to improving quality of communication among all actors on the labour market;
- elaborate descriptions of jobs and occupations in Slovakia;
- develop the national information system of occupations as a comprehensive communication tool for all subjects at the labour market;
- secure communication with other information systems.

The ISTP is based on the principle of matching labour market requirements to individual's profiles. The system is based on the databases of the so-called typical positions, which contain descriptions of activities, conditions at the workplace and requirements to be met by regular job practitioner. Each typical position contains continuously updated information on requirements on a person performing respective related work activities or occupations. Typical positions are enlisted within the Registry of Typical Position. Furthermore, the ISTP allows individuals to create their own profiles through the “Individual Potential Analysis”, and companies to develop descriptions of working positions within the own company catalogue.

- Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

- Employment services;
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Jobseekers and persons interested in employment;
- Employees;
- Employers;
- Educational institutions.

- Status of implementation

As mentioned above, the project was launched at the end of 2003. The task was assigned by the National Labour Office (at that time a public-legal body independent from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family) to Trexima Zlín, s.r.o., a Czech private consultancy in human resource development that became a major player in studying occupations in the Czech Republic. Later, after dissolution of the National Labour Office, supervision of the project was taken over by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Currently, the project is carried out by Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o., a private “specialised research-statistical and advisory-consulting organisation” making use of know-how of its mother organisation.

An open information system has been developed and databases are available at the website www.istp.sk. It is worth mentioning, that the Registry of Typical Positions contains descriptions of working positions in 48 occupational fields.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation;

The instrument is implemented nation-wide.

- Principles (to be) applied (quality assurance; recognition and mobility; creating equivalences across different education and training pathways, learning outcomes approach)

ISTP is an important prerequisite for creation of updated National System of Occupations, which is the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family contribution to renewal of the National Qualification System, and consequently, to establishment the National Qualification Framework corresponding to EQF. At the same time, it is an important instrument to achieve equivalence across different education and training pathways as well as learning settings (formal, non-formal, informal).

- Key actors involved (who and in what way?)

- Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o.;
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Ministry of Education;
- Employers via experts invited to participate at working groups.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies);

The ISTP project is monitored and quality check provided by multi-partisan expert commissions, and institutionally by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Furthermore, refinement of description and proposals of inclusion of new typical positions can also come from the public via an interactive website, and in practice also human resource managers from diverse sectors already intervene in the project making use of experience to adding or proposing changes within respective typical positions.

- Indicators of success

- No indicators of success have been explicitly set; elaboration of descriptions of jobs and occupations fully completed and used in practice can be considered a final indicator of success;
- Development of the national information system of working positions as a comprehensive communication tool for all subjects at the labour market and the interactive website lively accessed can be considered a partial indicator of success.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

ISTP is a source of information for the education sector on requirements of labour market, employers, on current and future requirements (skills, competences) on performing professions, and it consequently provides stimuli for innovation of the content or development of new study/training branches. Typical positions are used predominantly when laying down the graduate's profile as descriptions of typical positions create a basis for formulation of requirements on professional knowledge, skills and competences students have to acquire during their study. At the same time, descriptions of activities and examples of works presented in typical positions allow for

matching/covering the typical position with the study/training branch which optimally meets typical position's requirements (i.e. all requirements are met), or when some requirements are not being met. In the latter case typical positions bring information on further education (courses) a person interested in respective profession has to complete in order to meet all requirements and to be optimally qualified.

According to a representative of the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the headquarter of institutions offering public employment services (successor of the National Labour Office), results of the project are important for

- public employment services, in particular when analysing regional labour markets;
- linking study and training branches to labour market needs;
- employers to make human resource development policy more effective;
- guidance and counselling;
- specialists/theorists interested in profессиography.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Involvement of full variety of key players as well as support from all relevant central government bodies is inevitable for a full coverage of jobs and occupations, therefore cooperation must be permanently strengthened.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Elaboration of job profiles will be followed by development of the new National System of Occupations under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Furthermore, maintaining relevant databases open to permanent updating should also be backed and aligned to the NQF portal. This will however require an agreement between the two ministries responsible for the National System of Occupations and implementation of EQF (the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family), updating the existing National Qualification System and setting the overarching NQF is however a task, which currently goes beyond the focus and responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

7.3. Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET

7.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Traditionally, backed by legislation, qualification is understood as consisting of three components - level of education, specific vocational "capabilities", and in some cases, experience gained in the respective field. Although not all professions or trades are regulated, there is a pressure to achieve some education/training, which is as a rule quite strictly regulated. The transfer and accumulation of qualifications has not been an issue, as all regulations were dominantly national and a need for changes in qualifications was predominantly vertical and rarely horizontal. Just recently, due to restructuring of the economy and due to market forces a need for transfer of qualifications became a topic. The most important reason is that opening the country in economy led to possibilities to achieve international training and qualification. As a consequence, there is a natural pressure to recognise partial qualifications, which was not possible traditionally. National legislation is

lagging behind this. Recognition of partial qualification will be stipulated by the act on lifelong learning, the adoption of which is envisaged in 2009. This legislation in its draft version speaks for the first time also about the credit system in VET as one of the options for accumulation of prerequisites for obtaining a certificate on qualification. Nevertheless, there has been no comprehensive policy to implement ECVET elaborated so far. Even more, it is hardly to expect that the country is ready to adopt ECVET till 2012, as promoted by the EU. Although Slovakia responded positively towards ECVET within the consultation process, at the same time it has indicated some reservations. There are several reasons why the country is not prepared for ECVET:

- this policy is felt as less urgent compared to others in VET, and a success of ECTS in higher education is not considered a justified reason to accept a credit system in sub-tertiary education and training;
- crucial prerequisites for introduction a credit system, modularisation of education and training and a full shift to competence based training have not been achieved yet;
- formal institutions need time to digest a shift towards stressing outcomes instead of process as well as time to experience success of accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes.

As also visible from the country's response to the Commission within the consultation process, there is a fear concerning maintaining quality of education and training as a main difficulty is seen in setting "methods and responsibilities". Furthermore, at present "defining the method of the assignment of credit points and setting the reference figure" is considered "precipitous". Relative immaturity of VET to introduce ECVET is also visible from the expressed "problem to define the cumulation of units". Indeed, experiment from the 1990s aimed at reshaping VET into modules, which led to very promising results, gradually stopped due to lack of local support after the international project was finished.

It is important to stress, that there are opinions considering transfer and accumulation of competences and learning outcomes a flexible enough and more credible instrument compared to ECVET. In contrast to tertiary education, secondary VET is considered a substantially less open system due to more clearly recognised needs of employers and strict administrative regulations in order to secure performance and safety at workplace. No substantial added value is seen in translation of outcomes into credit points, which would compensate for the risk stemming from such a reduction of outcome control. Nevertheless, the country is open to study international experience and Slovak institutions are encouraged to cooperate in ECVET related activities within international projects.

7.3.2. Examples of policy measures

There is no policy in progress aimed at development of a national credit system for VET. In fact, there are no crucial preconditions created for setting such a policy either. The country needs more time to work on the transfer from traditional to competence based VET. There is a lesson to be learned from higher education, where malpractice examples occurred and allocations of credit points were made arbitrarily without a link to learning outcomes and learning load. This is indicating that a preparatory phase aimed at development of modules (units) and identification of appropriate competences/learning outcomes representing respective units must not be artificially shortened by politically set deadlines. Currently, IVET and CVET are in such a preparatory phase. After a successful completion of this phase the next step - allocation of credit points - will be much easier and manageable. It is expected that schools that are mature enough for such a step will make use of the opportunities to explore a credit system, as decentralisation of curriculum development introduced by a new Education Act coming in force since September 2008 will be accompanied by decentralisation of assessment and certification procedures (as intended by the act of lifelong learning, which is under preparation).

7.4. Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET

7.4.1. Policy progress since 2005 to introduce and promote Europass

In 2005, the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas affiliated to the Ministry of Education (ENIC/NARIC), was appointed to create the National Europass Centre, which has started to operate since 1st July 2005. In September 2005 a respective website was launched. Based on the request of Cedefop the Slovak National Observatory of VET, a Refernet point, elaborated a Slovak version of Europass website in order to offer a full national version of Europass documents and guidelines within the Europass website maintained by Cedefop. Availability of documents in the Slovak language boosted interest of Slovak entities in making use of the Europass. Europass CV is the most popular among Europass documents gradually developing to a standard format.

Issuing diploma supplements is fully settled, as it was transposed into Slovak legislation by Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education, as amended. All higher education institutions are able to issue this document on request in Slovak and/or a foreign language.

Issuing certificate supplements has not been backed by legislation until September 2008, with coming into force of the new Education Act. All schools are requested to issue, in addition to the certificate, a supplement containing details about completed educational programme, according to §18(9) of the aforementioned act.

Detailed statistics is available only about Europass – Mobility indicating a steep increase in interest.

Table 19

Europass - Mobility documents issued in 2006 to 2008

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008* |
|---------------------|------|------|-------|
| EU mobility | 203 | 489 | 591 |
| Individual mobility | 19 | 164 | 126 |
| Total | 222 | 653 | 717 |

Source: National Europass Centre

* till 30th June 2008

It is not possible to assess the influence of Europass on making learning outcomes more transparent, as it was fully up to the schools, whether and how they have elaborated the certificate supplements (see 7.4.2.). Although implementation of Europass could be considered a success with regard to individual entities' interests, making implementation of Europass - Certificate Supplement into practice nation-wide has been hampered by delayed curricular reform. Nevertheless, active schools were able to issue certificate supplements making use of learning outcomes/competences description within valid curricular documents, which have been since 2002 gradually renewed. In the light of coming curricular reform introducing decentralisation of curriculum development, no national activity has been taken to elaborate frameworks for issuing certificate supplements for respective study and training branches.

It is too early to expect synergy effects from implementation of Europass, EQF and ECVET due to different phases of launching process of respective instruments. While Europass can be considered implemented and a dramatic increase in making use of Europass – Certificate Supplement can be expected in the 2008/2009 school year, as a consequence of new legislation, work on NQF and EQF is in its initial phase and ECVET is even only in a debate phase among experts and decision makers so far. On the other hand, it would be a failure not to think about synergy effects when preparing legislation. It is expected, that within the act on VET and the act on lifelong learning a synergy effect and a need of coherence will be taken into account.

7.4.2. Examples of policy measures and practice

A. Title of policy measure

Establishment of a National Europass Centre

Following Decision No. 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 15th December 2004 on a single transparency framework for qualifications and competences (Europass), the Ministry of Education has decided to create the National Europass Centre within already existing Centre for the Recognition of Diplomas, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (ENIC/NARIC) since 1st July 2005.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

Aforementioned Decision has come in force since 1st January 2005 and Slovakia had to follow a common agreed policy.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

- coordinate the management of Europass documents;
- promote Europass and Europass documents;
- ensure that information and guidance centres are well informed about Europass and the Europass documents;
- ensure that all Europass documents are also available in a paper version;
- act as a national partner in the European network of National Europass Centres.

- Target groups

- Individuals interested in Europass documents;
- Entities issuing certificates (schools, educational institutions);
- Educational authorities;
- Counsellors.

- Status of implementation

The National Europass Centre is established, efficiency of service will be improved after Education Act coming in force since 1st September 2008.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of the Copenhagen process; coherence and synergy with policies implementing other Copenhagen tools will be gradually improved.

- Key actors involved

Ministry of Education, as NEC was established within the Ministry of Education

(see also Target groups)

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

No evaluation studies have been conducted yet. NEC has been concentrating on promotion of Europass documents and dissemination of related information in support of academic, VET and professional mobility, however without collecting data about impact. The only data collected is about mobility, data about issuing certificate and diploma supplements could be gained from schools on request, it is impossible to check how many individuals made use of CV and Language Passport. After Education Act is coming in force since September 2008, special assistance to schools will be needed, as all schools will be obliged to issue certificate supplements.

- Indicators of success

No specific indicators of success were set. An increasing number of Europass mobility documents could be seen as a proof of success, full awareness of all graduates about other documents could be secured by the guidelines of the Ministry of Education expected as a follow-up to the Education Act.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

Europass - Mobility document is linked to Lifelong Learning Programme activities and NEC cooperates with the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation running mobility programmes.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

In contrast to some other countries a Slovak NEC website is less detailed, particularly regarding specific assistance in issuing the certificate supplements. No specific guiding documents to assist various schools with many different programmes were elaborated due to incoming curricular changes. With a curricular reform starting in the 2008/2009 school year assistance to schools will be improved following new curricular conditions.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

NEC has left fully in the schools responsibility whether and how they issued certificate supplements so far. Assistance to schools needs to be improved as a consequence of the Education Act coming in force since September 2008, and subsequent sub-legal provisions. At the end of the school year, when the schools will be challenged by obligatory issuing certificate supplements, a special assistance will be demanded very much and some harmonisation pressure to secure equality in equal cases needed. NEC is intending to sign an agreement with the State Institute of Vocational Education to be able to cover a full variety of IVET programmes. A respective website will have to be updated to offer more detailed assistance to schools.

Furthermore, NEC is planning a special promotion activity to address human resource departments of state and public authorities to motivate them to require Europass CV and Language Passport formats in the process of staff recruitment. Depending on the results private entities will be addressed within the next phase.

7.5. Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET

7.5.1. Policy progress since 2002

Since 2002 the individual efforts of secondary specialised and secondary vocational schools for promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET did not receive a form of any national policy. Except the Leonardo da Vinci programme there are no other public financial sources directly available for mobility of VET students from secondary schools (see however example of policy below). Although some schools are organising such mobility for their students, the statistics is not available and all these activities are financed from additional sources (parents, receiving companies, potential employers, etc.). This is why it is not possible to compare the mobility at secondary level of education with those at higher education institutions where the Erasmus programme grants are complemented by other national and foreign sources (scholarships, grants for study or research mobility), so that the universities send abroad approx. 1 400 Erasmus students per year and about 200-300 students are getting grants from additional sources. In the area of VET there are about 1 200 pupils and 90 young workers taking part in the placement activity under Leonardo da Vinci programme per year. (Numbers of students sent for placement abroad by their home schools are not known.)

Lack of finances for mobility in VET is just one of the consequences of low attention paid to the issues of vocational education and training in Slovakia by governmental authorities for a long period. In this setting the VET schools have been able just to react ex-post to the needs and expectations presented by parents and/or by local and regional economic players. The VET schools are generally under-financed and most of them are not able to reach the expected quality of training; special weaknesses are felt in the area of practical skills and competences of youngsters in their transition to the working life.

Improvement in specific areas of VET could be reached as a result of several ESF national projects implemented by the State Institute for Vocational Education. But none of these national projects focusing on partial improvements is aimed at elaboration of a general strategy of VET development including improvement of the state of affairs in the VET mobility.

An interesting example of projects in support of mobility of VET experts is the ESF project "Implementation of Educational Programme Modular Distance Learning for European Mobility Career Counsellors (MODILE-EUROCOCO) Modified with Respect to Target Groups" capitalising on 2001-2004 Leonardo da Vinci project "Modular Distance Learning for European Mobility Career Counsellors (MODILE-EUROCOCO)", both carried out by the State Institute of Vocational Education.

7.5.2. Examples of policy measures

A. Title of policy measure

Provision of social scholarships of the government of the Slovak Republic to secondary school students for study at foreign secondary schools in 2008-2011

The measure was approved by the government on 27th February 2008.

B. Outline of the policy/measure

- Rationale

The policy resulted from the need to increase the proficiency in foreign languages, especially after Slovakia's entry to the EU. The measure is contributing to increasing educational mobility and competitiveness on the labour market.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets

The aim of the measure is to enable secondary school students who, due to their social situation, have neither possibility nor financial means to study abroad, to study one school year at a secondary school abroad.

The government has assigned SKK 270 million for the project covering scholarships for about 1 000 students for the total period 2008-2011. Costs per one student for one school year are about EUR 7 730. The scholarship should cover expenses for accommodation, meals, purchase of books and learning aids, travel costs (once a year), insurance and pocket money.

Students will make use of this instrument for the first time in the 2008/2009 school year. Scholarships will be granted for study in English, German, Russian, French, Spanish and Italian languages. The following priorities were set by the Ministry of Education:

- English (Malta, Great Britain and Ireland): 120 scholarships;
- German (Germany and Austria): 70 scholarships;
- Russian (Russia): 60 scholarships;
- French (France and Belgium): 40 scholarships;
- Spanish (Spain): 40 scholarships;
- Italian (Italy): 30 scholarships.

Finally 406 places have been agreed with foreign partners (the highest increase in numbers concerns additional 40 places in France)

- Target groups

Social scholarships are determined for students of the 3rd grade of secondary schools, 3rd or 4th grade of five-year bilingual schools, 7th grade of 8-year grammar schools and 5th grade of 6-year grammar schools. Students have to meet criteria concerning their learning achievements (average mark up to 2.0, 1-best and 5-worst) and proficiency in chosen foreign language (B1 or B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Within the selection procedure students from socially challenged families or socially disadvantaged environment will be preferred. Based on the social criteria set by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family the scholarship can be granted to students of respective secondary school who

- meet criteria set within §1(1)a) and b) of the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 311/2004 Coll. on Provision of Scholarships to Students of Secondary Schools and Special Schools;
- live in a substitute care, according to §44 of Act No. 36/2005 Coll., as amended.

- Status of implementation

The Draft Action Plan for the Provision of Social Scholarships of the Government of the SR to Secondary School Students for Study in Foreign Secondary Schools for 2008-2011 was approved by the government on 27th February 2008. The call and conditions for granting scholarships were published in March 2008 and the deadlines for submitting applications were set for individual self-governing regions and regional school offices during April and May. On 2nd April the government discussed the interim report submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on possibilities for students' placement in foreign secondary schools. The information also included the lists of suitable secondary schools in selected countries. Students will be selected by self-governing regions and regional school offices. After completion of selection procedure

the authorities will submit background documents to the Ministry of Education in May. The ministry will send nominations to Slovak embassies abroad. Embassies should announce to the Ministry of Education acceptations of students by foreign secondary schools in individual countries including conditions of acceptance for study.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

- Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/ employment/ social policy approach?

It is not an isolated policy as there are also other scholarships schemes, however this is the only one on support of both international mobility and assistance and support of socially challenged students.

- Key actors involved
 - Government Office coordinates activities and cooperates in preparation and publishing calls;
 - Ministry of Education decides on a number of scholarships, publishes calls, makes adjustment in international contractual documents, announces nominations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pays social stipends to accepted students;
 - Self-governing regions and regional school offices publish calls, select students from respective regions, submit background documents to the Ministry of Education;
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs examines possibilities for study with partners abroad, which also includes selection of secondary schools, cooperates with the Ministry of Education in adjusting and supplementing international contractual documents, submits nominations to Slovak embassies abroad and confirmations of acceptance by foreign secondary schools to the Ministry of Education;
 - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family sets social criteria for selection of students.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

As implementation of the measure is at its beginning, no evaluation studies have been elaborated.

It is expected that the instrument will contribute to increasing the access to study abroad and to improving foreign language skills of secondary school students, in particular those from socially challenged families and socially disadvantaged environment.

- Indicators of success
 - Number of students granted scholarships;
 - Secondary school students' foreign language skills improved.
- Integration of outcomes into other policies

The policy is in launching phase only.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

Results of the survey carried out by the embassies in possible target countries and reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the government meeting on 2nd April 2008 pointed to problems concerning legal control and responsibility in care for students under the age of full legal responsibility. The problems may occur concerning possibilities for accommodation of students of this age in dormitories, and high fees for dormitories, which in some countries exceed financial limits approved by the Slovak government.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

Problems to be addressed and solved include issues concerning legal control and responsibility in care for students under the age of full legal responsibility. 956 applications were submitted for total 406 places; selection of students has not yet been completed.

Theme 8. Development of VET statistics

8.1. Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (www.statistics.sk) is the national authority collecting data, producing statistics and initiating relevant legislative norms. In addition, there are two sectoral institutions producing important statistics:

The Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (www.upsvar.sk > Štatistiky) produces data on registered unemployed, disposable registered unemployed and on active labour market measures. From the VET point of view data on unemployed graduates and training for the labour market are of particular importance.

The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (www.uips.sk > Štatistiky), established in 1967 on the eve of changing Czechoslovakia into a federal state of two republics, has a long history of collecting data on numbers of schools, students, newly enrolled and graduates by schools and programmes. Furthermore, some specific data on teaching staff, financing and facilities are being collected. The institute is collecting data on higher education and continuing education as well. It also serves the Ministry of Education with ad hoc surveys, analyses and prognoses required by the ministry. Four regional computation centres (initially corresponding to four administrative regions in Slovakia) serve with processing different data, among which the most required is data on numbers of study places at individual schools and number of applications, and supply/demand statistics, which is in particular attractive at the time close to admission exams.

In contrast to statistical data in initial VET, which has been gathered in the standard way for many years and currently is fully harmonised with UOE standards, available national CVET data is not reliable. Although statistical instruments developed by the Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education have been legislatively anchored since 1996 and CVET providers are obliged by law to provide required data, the response rate is very low, e.g. in 2005 the response rate was below 22% and only 14.4% of addressees provided data on training.

There is a huge problem concerning data on enterprise-based training in Slovakia. Disregarding from some partial surveys (limited sectorally or by the number of respondents)

there is no data and relevant studies on this topic nation-wide. There is no national data on particular target groups subjected to training in respective enterprises and about types of providers of such training.

The National Institute for Education, which is a national curricular authority for general education, participates at many international projects like PISA, SITES, etc.

(http://www.statpedu.sk/buxus/generate_page.php?page_id=551).

The LFS data, collected by the Statistical Office is ILO compatible and respective data has been available since mid 1990s. Educational statistics provided by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education is UOE standard compatible, and the harmonised data has been available in time series since 2000.

Lots of predefined tables are available on the aforementioned websites, however the access to online primary data with the option for creating a self-constructed data is limited.

As a consequence of limited resources Slovakia failed to participate at important international activities, of which PISA 2000 and CVTS2 must be mentioned, as Slovakia was the only relevant country (OECD member, EU accession country), which did not participate.

Since 2002 there has been a significant improvement in participation in international measurements, as Slovakia participated in PISA 2003 and 2006, CVTS3, and in 2003 LFS ad hoc module focused on lifelong learning.

Nevertheless, a traditional format of national data needs improvement, particularly regarding the needs of regional development and labour market. Significantly, regional authorities collect their own data when working on their own analyses. The most visible weak point is related to the sectoral gap, when tracing school graduates. The education sector statistics offers data about a number of graduates per type of schools, type of programmes, and ISCED codes, however it does not pay attention to further assertion on the labour market or in further education. Labour market data is insufficiently linked to educational data, as no data about matching education and training to employment is available. For instance, as a consequence of this, there is no data about over-qualification, pushing out effects or jumping off qualification, etc. The only detailed data about graduates is from the registry of unemployed, which does not offer unbiased feedback for VET schools.

Furthermore, multidimensional statistics is as a rule not published and has to be required ad hoc (sometimes a fee to be paid) from respective institutions.

Although educational data and LFS data is periodically published, LFS quarterly and educational statistics annually, a specific project aimed at definitions of output would be welcomed by analysts and statisticians collecting data themselves. A specific problem, however very urgent, is the absence of detailed data about Roma. All official data related to Roma who declared themselves being of Roma nationality, which represents less than a quarter of estimated ethnic Roma. Collection data about ethnic Roma has been declared as violating law and this kind of activity as discriminatory, although as a consequence of this a lot of statistical data is biased or many important statistical data about ethnic Roma is not available, e.g. distribution of the level of education, employment by ISCO, employment/unemployment rates, unemployment by length, etc. As a result of this practice, ethnic Roma are underrepresented in LFS and some aggregate LFS data might be biased. The LFS sample (10 250 respondents) is sufficient for provision of regional statistics, however not for provision of district data. In case the number of requirements to deliver district data increases, it will be necessary to expand the sample.

Following are proposals aimed at improvement of collecting data and/or accessibility of data:

- to rethink measure to allow for adequate representation of ethnic Roma;
- refine unemployment data and instead of current practice of publishing on the website only tables with raw data to return to the practice of the former National Labour Office, which offered online service allowing for extraction of data according to a self-itemised format;
- fully rethink labour market intelligence and agree on publishing national and regional data in agreed structures and periods;
- improve continuing education and training data suffering from low response rate and ill-structured itemisation;

- develop instruments for forecasting/anticipating skill needs, as there is no national survey for collecting valid and reliable data available.

With upcoming informatisation of governance a large investment in hardware and software for creation a new information system in the education sector has been announced. A specific registry of students should allow for collection of individualised data, quality flow statistics, and refined multidimensional aggregate data. Although the main motivation for introduction of a new statistical system is better targeting financing of education (eliminating double-counting of students and counting not existing students), it is expected that the opportunity to adjust statistical outputs to requirements of analysts and policy makers will be used.

8.2. Examples of policies/measures/projects for improving national VET statistics

Although Slovakia emerged as an independent state in 1993 it has developed national statistical authorities as described above since 1967, when unitary Czechoslovakia was transformed into a federation of two states. In 1990s a process of harmonisation of data with the EU has started and is in progress in all areas. IVET relevant data has been already harmonised but substantial improvement in particular regarding labour market relevant VET data is needed. For instance, within the ESF SOP Human Resources Sub-measure 3.3.B “Systems for linking vocational education and training with the labour market”, 10 surveys of labour market needs and 20 studies of key occupations and establishment of a functional electronic system of mapping labour market needs were envisaged during 2004-2008. Nevertheless, activities were not carried out due to lacking expertise.

Therefore, the Skillsnet initiative of Cedefop is carefully being monitored in hope to make use of experience from Skillsnet. Future paneuropean survey intended to be developed within continuation of the project would be very welcomed due to the lack of experience with this kind of surveys.

There is no policy in progress explicitly aimed at improving or broadening the basis of VET statistics at national level except the project aimed at establishment of a so-called “Registry of Students” (see example below).

Example of policy

| |
|---|
| <p>A. Title of policy/measure/project</p> <p>Creating information system for regional schooling (the so-called “Registry of Students”) initiated in 2008</p> |
| <p>B. Outline of the policy/measure/project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale <p>The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education together with regional computing centres maintain a central database about pupils/students of primary and secondary schools and collects ad hoc data on the request of the Ministry of Education, e.g. on pedagogical staff with four year period.</p> <p>Decentralisation of competences towards regional schooling as well as dynamics of changes in the network of schools, programmes and individuals made a traditional flow of data obsolete. Updating databases using forms of annual reporting will be replaced by online collection of data flowing directly to the Institute of Information and Prognoses</p> |

of Education.

- Objectives and/or measurable targets
- Establishment of complex information system on regional schooling (including secondary VET) as a subsystem of education information system complying with information systems of public administration, according to Act No. 276/2006 Coll.;
- Registries redefined according to requirements of the Ministry of Education and other relevant bodies;
- Architecture of information system allowing for flexibility in collecting, processing and querying data.
- Target groups/Educational level(s) and sector(s)

Local, regional and national administrators

- Status of implementation.

Policy initiation paper was adopted by the Ministry of Education based on task 8.1 of 5/2008 meeting of the Minister's Gremium; a feasibility study is in progress.

C. Policy/measure operation and delivery

- Level of operation;

The policy will be implemented nation-wide.

- key actors involved (who and in what way?)
- Ministry of Education;
- Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education;
- MIM, s.r.o. – IT consulting company.

D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

- Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

Not yet relevant.

- Indicators of success

Complex information system on regional schooling established.

- Integration of outcomes into other policies

A measure is part of policy aimed at modernisation of information system in the country.

E. Conclusions

- Obstacles encountered and overcome (what did not work and why?)

It is not yet possible to comment on obstacles. There is however a risk that not all relevant players/users will be taken into account due to the time pressure.

- What issues remain to be addressed?

It is not yet possible to comment on this. However, it is expected that traditional educational data will be enriched and interlinked with labour market intelligence data to allow for detailed analysis of assertion of graduates on the labour market, which is currently hampered by non-availability of relevant data.

Theme 9. VET beyond 2010

9.1. What VET issues do you believe should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010 and why?

The Slovak VET system is still, and despite many changes after 1989, dominantly IVET focused, school based and state budget funded. Original setting from the 1970s is not tenable anymore, as it is impossible to guarantee both interest of students and placement on the labour market for detailed variety of programmes and schools. As a consequence of inability of VET schools to attract students for ISCED 3C programmes, which is typical for secondary vocational schools, many of them underwent a dramatic restructuring and originally respective sector focused schools (e.g. agriculture, construction, mechanical engineering) started to offer programmes across sectors and competing with schools with much longer tradition.

Gradually provision of programmes was adjusted to students' desires regardless their capabilities and regardless labour market needs. Declining population, fiscal pressure through per capita funding led to merging of different kinds of schools to such an extent that original three-tiered secondary schools system - grammar schools (G), secondary specialised schools (SSS; designed for ISCED 3A programmes, providing ISCED 3C programmes just marginally) and secondary vocational schools (SVS; originally with dominance of ISCED 3C programmes) - became unreadable.

The new 2008 Education Act introduces two-tiered secondary system composed of grammar schools and VET schools. This measure can positively influence further development of secondary VET system, as it prevents from biased choice between VET schools. Many parents and students simplified the choice of secondary schools by simplistic ranking of schools by the status assigned to the kind of school (increasing from SVS to SSS and G) regardless a real quality of the programme. A similar problem will be present within newly introduced VET schools, however affecting a choice between higher status ISCED 3A programmes and lower status ISCED 3C programmes (again, regardless the real quality of the programme and the possibility to assert on the labour market). Nevertheless, under new terms, this problem is easier to manage, as the competition between alternatives happens under one roof in contrast to earlier situation, where SVS competed with SSS and even grammar schools to gain students.

Now Slovakia faces a new urgent challenge to create a new kind of VET school offering variety of programmes covering both student and labour market needs. It must be stressed, that crucial issue is to revive links to businesses and prevent from further decline of the quality of practical training in ISCED 3C programmes. As it is impossible to finance all existing VET schools from the state budget up to the highest technological level, the new act on VET, expected in November 2008, envisages creation of centres of VET regionally and sectorally spread through the country. A VET school upgraded to the centre of VET will not just serve a quality benchmark for IVET but it will also become an important agent to overcome currently fragmented VET as it will have to offer CVET, labour market training and

promote lifelong learning within the respective sector and region. Thus, a window of opportunity is open for VET schools in Slovakia on the verge of the decade to re-profile themselves. They can renew their curricula as the 2008 Education Act valid since September 2008 decentralised curriculum development and schools are free to develop tailor-made curricula, however sticking to the framework of obligatory state curricula. After completion of the first cycle of the reform, i.e. exactly after 2010, Slovakia will be busy with evaluation of results and promotion of a learning process to reshape schools and programmes according to identified proposals of corrections. Furthermore, with increasing freedom and opening in provision of education and training beyond IVET, schools will become open to independent reflection of the Copenhagen tools regardless the national policy. This is concerning particularly making use of the Europass and increasing stress towards modularisation of curricula with even more detailed pronunciation of competence/learning outcomes based programming.

Slovakia has not yet elaborated legislative support for recognition and certification of non-formal and informal learning. This should be done by the still pending act on lifelong learning, as visible from its draft version. The act on lifelong learning should be adopted in 2009 after adoption of the act on VET, which should indicate the possibility to validate learning regardless its setting, exactly through the aforementioned centres of VET. Hence, although Slovakia is lagging behind other countries with regard to development of validation system encompassing all formal, non-formal and informal learning, forthcoming act on VET and subsequent act of lifelong learning should boost relevant activities in this area. Therefore, on the verge of 2010 Slovakia will be busy with refining validation practice in line with pronunciation of learning outcomes within standards of VET. Currently, validation of non-formal and informal learning is not hampered just by missing legislation but also by insufficiently elaborated methodology of validation. Although curriculum in formal VET has been already redesigned into a competence based one, much more detailed competence based description is needed to secure reliability within the procedure of certification of learning acquired outside a school.

Slovakia has welcomed recommendation to establish EQF and has agreed to adjust its current qualification system to EQF and also to develop the National Qualification Framework. Nevertheless, initial estimation 3-4 years needed for this task announced within the consultation process must be revised. The country will need much more time to adjust its National Qualification System to EQF in full extent including creation of overarching National Qualification Framework across sectors and settings. Currently, elaboration of the National System of Occupations is in progress sticking to EQF and creating conditions for reforming the current national qualification system according to EQF. A crucial step to increase transparency and flexibility in acquiring qualification: decomposition of qualification into a set of sub-qualifications has not been made yet, and recognition of sub-qualifications is still not possible. Again, the act on lifelong learning should legislatively back this.

Slovakia needs more time to digest changes influencing VET under the pressure of globalisation of economy as well as within conditions of emerging regional labour markets. Implementation of Copenhagen tools in full extent will still remain a topic between 2010 and 2015.

Implementation of ECVET is not considered an urgent agenda by some experts in the country in light of unclear value added from this in practice and due to more time needed to fully achieve basics; i.e.

- setting learning outcomes/competence based programmes;
- quality assurance linked to national performance standards (currently still under development), reflecting the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework and making use of international experience shared within ENQA-VET;
- absorb innovations, including incoming technological changes.

Parallel between ECVET and ECTS is not considered justified; successful implementation of the credit system in tertiary education does not substantiate future success in secondary VET due to different conditions within the two subsystems (see also section 7.3.).

The following VET issues have to be in the national agenda:

- completing a shift towards competence/learning outcome based VET in all segments and sectors resulting in renewed National Qualification System recognising sub-qualifications across all sectors and segments of VET;
- refining methodology for validation of learning regardless the learning setting;
- links between VET and a world of business must be revitalised; by the act on VET proposed National VET Council, regional VET councils and sectoral VET councils offer an opportunity to rebuild current rather informal institution of this kind of cooperation, nevertheless these councils must be made functional and equipped with relevant instruments and data;
- quality assurance reflecting the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework and making use of international experience shared within ENQA-VET;
- career guidance and counselling must be renewed and should offer a balanced mix of personal and electronic services; eServices must be decisively improved in quality and transparency;
- VET and labour market research must be revitalised, in particular with regard to forecasting/anticipating labour market needs, as current mismatch between supply and demand resulted also from the lack of relevant labour market intelligence;
- provision of statistical data must be refined in particular with regard to links between education and labour market and accessible online.

The following VET issues might be in the EU agenda:

- i) Strengthening mutual learning as expressed within the revised priority No. 3 of the Helsinki Communiqué should be stressed, in particular to support coherence among respective VET policies supported by assessment of practice in advanced countries.
- ii) It is important to offer time for digesting changes as well as capitalise from experience with regard to implementation of diverse Copenhagen tools. Particular attention should be paid to
 - description of learning outcomes/competences, their relation to description of qualifications and subsequently comparisons of national qualification frameworks in terms of vocabulary used and a level of reliability within respective validation procedures;
 - refining methodologies of validation learning outcomes and competences adopted in particular instruments allowing measurable results; cooperation of stakeholders should be emphasised, as also proposed by the Helsinki Communiqué;
 - capitalise on experience from implementation of the Common Quality Assurance Framework in respective countries and from reflection of European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, strengthening a role of Quality Assurance National Reference Points in experience sharing;
 - a prerequisite to successful implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning, establishing NQF complying with EQF and finally also crucial for implementation of ECVET is common understanding of importance of stressing learning outcomes over education/learning process in mutually accepted terms: acceptable modules/units of training, acceptable descriptions of required outcomes, followed by acceptable validation procedures. (Therefore implementation of ECVET should not be pronounced too early and progress in ECVET implementation pushed politically.)
- iii) The specific learning needs and changing role of vocational teachers and trainers should be studied in more detail, and as indicated in the Maastricht Communiqué (EU level priority iv) making their profession more attractive should be prioritised; ageing of teachers and trainers in EU countries and the importance to attract experienced practitioners as VET trainers are making this task a hot topic.
- iv) A special attention should be paid to VET and labour market statistics as recommended by the Helsinki Communiqué with a special focus on anticipating skill needs.

9.2. How could these issues be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets?

i) Strengthening mutual learning:

Good practice examples about implementation of Copenhagen tools should be elaborated in a specific easy-to-read way with transparent templates allowing for common learning process of policy makers and VET experts from a respective country, e.g.

- description of initial status;
- description of policy/measure in controllable terms (indicators of success, indicators of failure);
- description of the status after implementation of policy;
- recommendations for policy makers;
- recommendations for VET experts;
- indication of future changes in policies (corrections, adjustments, expansions, etc.).

Easy-to-read initial documents displayed at a website may help go beyond usual political rhetoric and assist respective countries to start the learning process. The possibility to identify obstacles and progress in implementation of respective policies should attract relevant players to a detailed study of practice in successful countries. Subsequent peer learning of mixed groups of decision makers and VET experts could be even more pronounced than until now.

ii) Copenhagen tools implementation

Similarly to point i) development of specific good practice examples of Copenhagen tools implementation attractive for decision-makers should be pronounced in order to support mutual learning leading to immediate practical results in implementation of relevant tools and

- deepening understanding of policy development in respective countries and prevent from plain rhetoric and superficial actions under the umbrella of European cooperation;
- allowing time to digest changes resulting from implementation of the Copenhagen tools, to increase coherence and ensure synergy between tools already in implementation;
- making stop before further progress with ECVET in order to capitalise from experience from already implemented policies first.

iii) Teachers and trainers

- Practice from setting standards of training of teachers and trainers should be compared, in order to share experience, support internationalisation of training and mobility of teachers and trainers;
- Special attention should be paid to enhancement of ICT competences of teachers and trainers as well as technological culture as a whole by setting standards and leading to international certification;
- The status of teachers and trainers should be studied and compared across EU in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in respective countries;
- Development of digital resources to facilitate individual learning of future teachers and trainers and/or individualised in-service training of teachers and trainers.

iv) VET statistics

Apart from the already identified need to improve VET and labour market data and develop indicators and benchmarks, all instruments allowing for interlinking VET and labour market features to better understand assertion into the labour market, should be stressed, e.g.

- supporting paneuropean survey envisaged by the Cedefop project Skillsnet based on a common enterprise questionnaire as a complementary instrument to national instruments of anticipation of skill needs to allow for sharing of experience from national surveys and obtaining comparative data EU-wide.

10. Authors, bibliographical references and sources

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<http://www.profesia.sk/> (Profesia, spol. s r.o., Bratislava)

<http://www.askforjob.sk/> (AMROP HEVER Slovakia)

<http://www.topjobs.sk/> (LMC, s.r.o.)

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Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce sociálnych vecí a rodiny, ÚPSVaR)

www.upsvar.sk

Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, ÚIPŠ)

www.uips.sk

Institute of Labour and Family Research (Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, IVPR)

<http://www.sspr.gov.sk/>

Integrated System of Typal Positions (Integrovaný systém typových pozícií, ISTP)

www.istp.sk

Ministry of Economy of the SR (Ministerstvo hospodárstva SR, MH)

<http://www.economy.gov.sk/>

Ministry of Education of the SR (Ministerstvo školstva SR, MŠ)

www.minedu.sk

Ministry of Finance of the SR (Ministerstvo financií SR, MF)

<http://www.finance.gov.sk/>

Ministry of Health of the SR (Ministerstvo zdravotníctva SR, MZ)

<http://www.health.gov.sk/>

Ministry of Interior of the SR (Ministerstvo vnútra SR, MV)

<http://www.minv.sk/>

Ministry of Justice of the SR (Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR, MS)

<http://www.justice.gov.sk/>

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, MPSVR)

www.employment.gov.sk

National Institute for Education (Štátny pedagogický ústav, ŠPÚ)

www.statpedu.sk

Office of Plenipotentiary of the Government SR for Roma Communities (Úrad splnomocnenca vlády Slovenskej republiky pre rómske komunity)

<http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/>

Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie, VÚDPaP)

<http://www.vudpap.sk/>

Slovak Foreign Policy Association (Slovenská spoločnosť pre zahraničnú politiku)

<http://www.sfpa.sk/>

State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, ŠIOV)

www.siov.sk

Statistical Office of SR (Štatistický úrad SR, ŠÚ SR)
www.statistics.sk

Trexima Bratislava, Ltd. (Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o.)
www.trexima.sk

10.3. List of Acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| ALMP | Active labour market policy |
| ASS | Associated secondary school (združená stredná škola) |
| BPD | Basic pedagogical documents (základné pedagogické dokumenty) |
| CPI | Consumer price index |
| CV | Curriculum vitae |
| CVET | Continuing vocational education and training |
| CVTS | Continuing Vocational Training Survey |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECVET | European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training |
| ENQA-VET | European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training |
| EQF | European Qualification Framework |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| G | Grammar school (gymnázium) |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| HR | Human resources |
| ICT | Information communication technology |
| ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education |
| ISCO | International Standard Classification of Occupations |
| ISTP | Information System of Typal Positions |
| IVET | Initial vocational education and training |
| LFS | Labour force survey |
| LLG | Lifelong guidance |
| LLL | Lifelong learning |
| NACE | Nomenclature générale des activités économiques (General Classification of Economic Activities of the European Community) |
| NEC | National Europass Centre |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NP | National project |
| NQF | National Qualification Framework |
| NQS | National Qualification System |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| PPP | Purchasing power parity |
| QMS | Quality management system |
| SITES | Second Information Technology in Education Study |
| SOP | Sectoral operational programme |
| SPD | Single programming document |
| SSS | Secondary specialised school (stredná odborná škola) |
| SVS | Secondary vocational school (stredné odborné učilište) |
| UOE | UNESCO, OECD, Eurostat |
| VET | Vocational education and training |