

Slovakia – a crucial day for VET in Slovakia?

In June 2014, two important events with high relevance to future development of vocational education and training (VET) took place in Slovakia.

First, the conference 'Transformation of VET' was held with participation of Maroš Ševčovič, Vice-president of the European Commission, Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Dušan Čaplovič, Minister for Education, Science, Research and Sport, and Branislav Ondruš, State Secretary of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

In the plenary session key stakeholders, government representatives, self-governing regions and employers discussed the challenges of transforming initial VET (IVET). A national ESF project 'Development of secondary VET' that should be instrumental for the planned changes was presented followed by parallel sessions aimed at discussing four main topics:

- labour market needs and regulation of enrolment in secondary IVET;
- career guidance and counselling in secondary and primary schools;
- modernising IVET schools and future impulses of a dual system;
- quality assurance.

Coherent policies and synergy in stakeholders' activities are a precondition for further improvement. Career management and guidance services must start earlier and also address lower secondary pupils. Labour market intelligence must offer better structured data to inform both individuals and decision-makers in the education sector.

Second, an expert seminar 'Bilan de compétences in employment services' presented initial results of a Leonardo da Vinci project. It aims to adapt competence-based career guidance used in France, Germany and other countries and quality management in guidance for employment services in Slovakia and to train counsellors.

The portfolio of competences needs to be aligned with the qualifications system and skills needs in Slovakia. ESF projects to develop a national occupation system and a national qualifications system should help achieve this.

Linking IVET issues better to labour market retraining and continuing VET, which were discussed separately either explicitly or implicitly in the two different conferences, could lead to higher employability of IVET graduates and better services for job-centre users.

Both these events were held on the same day - 6 June 2014. Let this coincidence signal interlinking activities and even closer cooperation of stakeholders in the future.

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