

Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

Slovakia

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Introduction – National and international discourse on apprenticeship

There is a lot of confusion about apprenticeship in Slovakia. There is also a lot of confusion about apprenticeship in Slovakia within international studies including those commissioned by the European Commission. We will comment on this confusion and even harsh mistakes contained in international studies in more detail in Annex A.

Although there are no regular apprenticeship programmes in Slovakia, sometimes the term apprentice (“učeň”) is used in the national discourse, however, predominantly in media or in common speech. There are eight different contexts within which the term “apprentice” is sometimes used, although the term “apprentice” has no backing in legislation and all individuals in IVET are called students (“žiaci”), according to legislation. Some of these contexts can be seen as referring to apprenticeship-type schemes.

A. Apprenticeship-type schemes and work-based learning

Definitions

There is no official definition of apprenticeship in Slovakia and there is no regular apprenticeship¹ in Slovakia in contrast to first half of 20th century and in contrast to the current German-type dual system. IVET programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship can contain some apprenticeship-type component or, better, work-based learning component, but this always happens under the responsibility of VET schools.

There is also no official definition of provision of work-based learning. The official Eurostat definition of work-based learning is used for international statistics with the following correction: As there are no reliable detailed data on environment and premises where the practical training is delivered, the UOE statistics for Slovakia includes the number of students who are offered practical training within more than 25 % of curricula, regardless of the environment it is delivered in. It would be more correct to include only students with practical training offered under the specific conditions described by the UOE manual², but it is not yet possible to receive reliable data fully corresponding to the UOE definition³.

Dissatisfaction of employers with current secondary IVET leads to the efforts to introduce the “elements of dual system”⁴ and to calls for “transformation of secondary VET”⁵. Practical

¹ Further we will speak about an ideal type of apprenticeship as described in the Cedefop guidelines to this study. This description is as follows:

- Apprenticeship curriculum leads to a formally recognized qualification (ideally included in the national qualifications framework) and provides a full set of knowledge, skills and competences to give access to a specific (group of) occupation(s) recognized by employers;
- The form of training combines study and work and includes alternance between a specific work-place (employer) and a specific educational institution or training centre;
- All aspects of apprenticeship are explicitly defined in the apprenticeship contract, in a legally binding document;
- The design of curriculum and of modes of delivery is done in cooperation (9) with social partners (employers but also employees).

² UOE manual (2010), available e.g. at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/UOE2010manual_volume1.doc, speaks about combined school- and work-based programmes with less than 75 per cent of the curriculum presented in the school environment (including distance education).

³ We will describe difficulties with collection of data later, and we will also offer some available data and estimations.

⁴ See e.g. Slovakia: VET in Europe: country report 2013, http://www.refernet.sk/images/news/files/2013_SK_CR.pdf.

⁵ The national ESF project “Development of Secondary VET”, <http://www.rsov.sk>, implemented under the strong influence of automotive industry representatives. See also the conference “Transformation of VET”, <http://rsov.sk/node/61>, to be held on 6 June 2014 with participation of the vice-president of the European Commission, the minister of education, science, research and

training within a new secondary VET format should be substantially strengthened in volume and quality. Similarly to the dual system practical training will be offered by companies, complemented by theoretical education offered by the school. In contrast to the dual system, however, trainees will not be employees of the company and will be again students of the school. Thus, the final responsibility for IVET will be with the school. Details of practical training will be agreed between the school and the company, and details of the status of individual students by an apprenticeship contract (“učňovská zmluva”) between the individual student and the company. Students will be given some remuneration for their productive work, but not the wage.

This new form of IVET is referred to as IVET with “elements of dual system”, according to policy papers announcing the change in legislation planned to come in force from 1 September 2015. The following can be seen as a definition of a future apprenticeship-type scheme to be introduced in 2015:

- higher share of practical training (about 60 %);
- provision of practical training in companies (or appropriately equipped centres of VET) and provision of theoretical education in VET schools;
- apprenticeship contracts between companies and individual trainees (students of VET schools);
- institutional contracts between companies and schools on provision of VET (practical training and theoretical education).

This kind of “a dual approach” is already piloted in cooperation with Swiss, Austrian and German partners and should help introduce this new apprenticeship-type scheme. We will comment on this international cooperation in Annex B.

“Sort of apprenticeship” cases

There are no regular apprenticeship programmes in Slovakia anymore, although the term “apprentice” is used (and often fully incorrectly and under the influence of tradition) also now. This might typically happen in eighth cases as already indicated earlier:

1. Students participating in ISCED 3 VET programmes aimed at receiving a certificate of apprenticeship (“výučný list”) are often called apprentices (“učni”) due to tradition and due to the influence of the title of the certificate they receive. They represented only 12.9 % of all students in upper secondary VET in the 2011/2012 school year (see Table 1). Nevertheless, also these ISCED 3C programmes are in general school-based, and individuals attending the programmes are students (“žiaci”) according to legislation, similarly to individuals attending general programmes at grammar schools.

sport, the minister of labour, social affairs and family and the minister of foreign and European affairs, offering the first results from the aforementioned ESF project.

2. Graduates of some VET programmes receive two certificates – a certificate of apprenticeship and a “maturita” school-leaving certificate. Students of some of these ISCED 3A programmes are also sometimes called apprentices, as in past some programmes of this kind were offered in schools originally affiliated to enterprises. Students in programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship⁶ represent approximately 40 % of all upper secondary students. This corresponds to the UOE data presenting IVET work-based students as % of upper secondary IVET⁷, and this is why the share of apprentices among upper secondary students is sometimes indicated as about 40 %.
3. Some students of programmes aimed at receiving a certificate of apprenticeship after completion of their study⁸ are offered practical training in schools’ own work-type facilities (e.g. school restaurant), in educational establishments created to offer practical training under work-like conditions, and also in premises of a cooperating company or even in the workplace. The share of these students⁹ can vary on annual bases or within individual programmes. There is no reliable statistical data about the students who are offered practical training this way. Nevertheless, students in these programmes are trained for traditional apprenticeship-type professions and therefore are often seen as apprentices, in contrast to other VET school programmes, within which practice and adoption of practical competences is organised the other way. According to estimations based on the official data, there were over 80 % of students offered practical training in a school environment and less than 20 % in a work-type environment in the 2011/2012 school year (see Table 3 and Scheme 1).
4. Some students of programmes aimed at receiving a certificate of apprenticeship after completion of their study¹⁰ can be offered practical training in premises of a regular company or even in the workplace. The distribution of these students can vary on annual bases or within individual programmes. There are no reliable statistical data about students who are offered practical training in premises within enterprises or even directly in the workplace¹¹.

⁶ ISCED 3C programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship and ISCED 3A programmes leading to two certificates – a certificate of apprenticeship and a “maturita” school-leaving certificate.

⁷ E.g. 40.5 % in 2010, according to the Cedefop study (2014) On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies: country statistical overviews: update 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3066_en.pdf, p. 91.

⁸ Regardless of whether together with the ISCED 3A “maturita” school-leaving certificate or only the ISCED 3C certificate of apprenticeship.

⁹ This case refers to ISCED 3C students who are within their practical training in contact with bosses/managers and/or clients, regardless of whether it is a regular company or a company-like environment.

¹⁰ Regardless of whether together with the ISCED 3A “maturita” school-leaving certificate or with only the ISCED 3C certificate of apprenticeship.

¹¹ A unique example of acquisition of practical skills needed in the industry in close cooperation with an enterprise is a private VET school having been maintained by a metallurgy company Železiarne Podbrezová since 2003. Since then, provision of work-based learning has increased based on diverse institutional agreements between VET schools and enterprises, in particular in the industrial sectors interested in IVET graduates better suitable for their companies’ needs. Some information is contained in Table 3. At least 2.15 % should have been given this kind of practical training in the 2011/2012 school year, but it can be more, as annual data are collected very early (as of 15 September of a given school year) and also because contracting parties might be reluctant to informing about these contracts.

5. Some schools conclude an institutional contract between the school and the respective company in order to offer to students practical training directly in companies. This practical training is offered under the assistance of the company staff members, but under the responsibility of the school and supervised by the school staff. Sometimes, exactly these students are considered apprentices. These students have, however, no individual contracts with companies. They are covered by an institutional agreement between the school and the company enabling them to receive practical training in company's premises¹². Data about numbers of students offered practical training based on such institutional contracts is collected, however they might be biased¹³.
6. Companies interested in employing new young workers can sign a pre-employment contract with a student of the VET school (in case he/she is already 15 years old) and/or an agreement on his/her future employment. It is based on § 53 of the Labour Code. Although these individuals receive financial contribution from the company (motivation stipends, reward for productive work, and they can get covered some additional costs, e.g. accommodation, travelling, medical and psychological testing required by specific professions, as well as provision of work and protective equipment)¹⁴ they are still students of the school and not employees of the company¹⁵.
7. A new innovative format of post-secondary VET focused on computer systems has been launched since the 2013/2014 school year, initiated by T-Systems Slovakia, s.r.o., and supported by the German – Slovak Chamber of Industry and Commerce. 30 students are offered a three-year ISCED 5B programme containing up to 70 % of curricula work-based learning offered by the company. Due to a high share of practice and capitalisation on the German experience, the programme is called a “dual education” by media and stakeholders. It is an apprenticeship-type programme inspired by the curricula of the respective German dual programme, however it is not a dual model programme and participants are regular students of the Secondary Specialised School in Košice.
8. Another very innovative format of training has been launched for 24 participants since September 2013, initiated by Volkswagen Slovakia, a. s. A two-year modularised continuing education programme in Mechatronics for 18-25 olds holding at least a certificate of apprenticeship was accredited according to Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. Practical training is offered in a newly created Centre of Dual Education placed directly in the Volkswagen's premises. The programme is strongly practice-oriented (up to 80 % of curricula) and company needs-based with a curriculum based on the German experience. Therefore, this programme is often labelled as “dual

¹² It can be according to § 43 (12) of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. Prior to coming into force of this Act and of the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET similar agreements were based on other pieces of legislation, e.g. the Commercial Code and reference to the Commercial Code has also remained preserved in agreements after 2009.

¹³ Data are collected as of 15 September and it is possible that contracts are concluded later, and there is also anecdotal evidence that contracting parties consider these contracts as confidential and do not want to make them public. See more about estimations later within Table 3 and Scheme 1.

¹⁴ See more in the subchapter Summary of essential information.

¹⁵ There were only 2 students indicated in the 2011/2012 school year, according to the official statistics collected at the beginning of this school year (as of 15 September).

education” by politicians and in media. Participants do not receive a certificate equal to the graduation from the formal programme of secondary specialised school, but to a certificate on completion of an accredited continuing education programme. Subsequently, they are recognised as qualified according to the German law and the Volkswagen rules. It is expected that in the future their qualification will be also recognised by the Slovak legislation and graduates of this training could receive a certificate equivalent to formal education according to the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

It must be stressed that in all but the last two cases trainees have a status of a secondary school student (equal to the status of a grammar school student). In the first five cases they have no individual relations with companies, and in a very marginal sixth case their individual contracts with the company do not affect their practical training (as it can also be fully school-based). It can be said that these students are trained for the company rather than by the company, in contrast to the dual VET. Two innovative formats of training initiated by companies are programmes with a strong component of work-based learning. While in the case of T-System participants are also students of secondary school, in the case of Volkswagen the programme is not yet part of IVET and participants are employed and trained according the specific needs of the company.

None of these cases is fully compatible with the definition of apprenticeship as set by the Cedefop guidelines to this study¹⁶. Nevertheless, Cases 4-8 and partly (depending on the respective provision of training) also Case 3 can be seen as a sort of apprenticeship-type programme.

Statistics

The following table presents distribution of students in respective upper secondary programmes.

Table 1. Distribution of ISCED 3 students by programmes in 2011/2012 school year

ISCED	3	3 GEN	3A VET	3C VET	3 VET
All	243 400	73 806	138 171	31 423	169 594
%	100	30.3	56.8	12.9	69.7

Source: UOE 2013 (data of full-time students as of 15/09/2011).

Notes: GEN – general education (grammar school); 3A VET – study programmes; 3C VET – training programmes.

¹⁶ The following are characteristics of apprenticeship according to Cedefop guidelines.

- Apprenticeship curriculum leads to a formally recognized qualification (ideally included in the national qualifications framework) and provides a full set of knowledge, skills and competences to give access to a specific (group of) occupation(s) recognized by employers;
- The form of training combines study and work and includes alternance between a specific work-place (employer) and a specific educational institution or training centre;
- All aspects of apprenticeship are explicitly defined in the apprenticeship contract, in a legally binding document;
- The design of curriculum and of modes of delivery is done in cooperation (9) with social partners (employers but also employees).

These data indicate that the upper secondary VET stream was very strong (up to 70 %), but 3-year ISCED 3C VET programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship and to many crafts and professions missing at the labour market were attended by only 12.9 % of all ISCED 3 students¹⁷. It must be however repeated that within the ISCED 3A VET stream there are three different sub-streams: a genuine ISCED 3A programme completed with a “maturita” school-leaving certificate, an ISCED 3A programme for ISCED 3C graduates offering a “maturita” school-leaving certificate, and finally, an ISCED 3A programme offering both a “maturita” school-leaving certificate and a certificate of apprenticeship (study programme with extended number of hours of practical training, študijný odbor s rozšíreným počtom hodín praktického vyučovania). In contrast to the first two programmes, the latter programme contains a high share of practical training and therefore students attending these programmes are included within the UOE statistics as being provided work-based learning¹⁸.

Table 2. Number of students in ISCED 3 programmes in 2011/2012 school year

ISCED	3	3 GEN	3A VET	3C VET	3 VET
All	243 400	73 806	138 171	31 423	169 594
WBL	76 327	0	44 953	31 374	76 327
WBL (%)	31.4	0	32.5	99.8	45.0

Source: UOE 2013 (data of full-time students as of 15/09/2011).

Notes: GEN – general education (grammar school); 3A VET – study programmes; 3C VET – training programmes; WBL – practical training is interpreted as work-based learning; respective data indicate numbers and shares of students offered practical training in amount exceeding 25 % of the curriculum.

The table above indicates that while almost all ISCED 3C students are offered curricula with more than 25 % of practical training, only 32.5 % of ISCED 3A VET students participate in study programmes with extended number of hours of practical training featuring more than 25 % of curricula in practical training.

When looking on hours in curricula, 31.4 % of all ISCED 3 students are seen as having been offered work-based learning. The situation is much more complex when looking on implementing curricula, as a dominant share of students is offered practical training in workshops placed in schools and centres of practical training that belong to the educational system. Even in the case of provision of practical training in the workplace this training is supervised by the school staff and offered under the responsibility of the school.

Thus, work-based learning is often offered as integrated in a school-based programme, through on-site "real life" work environments (own workshops), and/or simulations of real business (e.g. own restaurant).

National data collected annually at the beginning of a school year (as of 15 September) offer also some data on delivery of practical training. The next table offers the data for the 2011/2012 school year corresponding to the UOE 2013 data used in the previous tables.

¹⁷ These students were in past called apprentices and their practical training was often offered in workplaces.

¹⁸ This UOE statistics includes students offered work-based learning within practical training that represents more than 25 % of curricula. In the Slovak data it is regardless of detailed analysis of premises where the practical training is offered. It would be more correct to include only students with practical training under specific conditions (e.g. as described in Case 4), but it is not yet possible to receive reliable data at the beginning of the school year, when data are collected.

According to these data 83 % of students who have extensive practical training are offered this training in a school environment and only about 17 % in a work-type environment. Provision of practical training by employers was neglectable.

Table 3. Distribution of VET students* by delivery of practical training in 2011/2012

Delivery of practical training	ISCED 3C		ISCED 3A extended PT		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
School	24 552	78.26	29 275	84.24	53 827	81.40
Educational institution (e.g. CPT)	903	2.88	277	0.80	1 180	1.78
Total (school environment)	25 455	81.13	29 552	85.04	55 007	83.19
Contracted institution**	5 241	16.70	4 456	12.82	9 697	14.66
Physical person and contracts***	676	2.15	743	2.14	1 419	2.15
Employer	2	0.01	0	0.00	2	0.00
Total work-type environment	5 919	18.87	5 199	14.96	11 118	16.81
All in practical training	31 374	100	34 751	100	66 125	100

Source: National statistics of Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (data as of 15/09/2011). From 2014 this institute merged with the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information.

Notes: * Covered are students of ISCED 3C programmes and ISCED 3A programmes with extended practical training. Students of ISCED 3A study programmes offering a "maturita" school-leaving certificate and a certificate of apprenticeship if at least 1,200 hours of practical training were delivered (e.g. in hotel academies or mechatronic programmes) are excluded, ISCED 3A follow-up studies for ISCED 3A graduates are not included.

** Usually based on traditional relations (with shops, restaurants, enterprises, etc.) and contracts other than those made according to § 43 (12) of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

*** Physical person (usually craftsmen offer practical training to one and maximum 3 students); contracts are made according § 43 (12) of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (not only with craftsmen, but also with large enterprises).

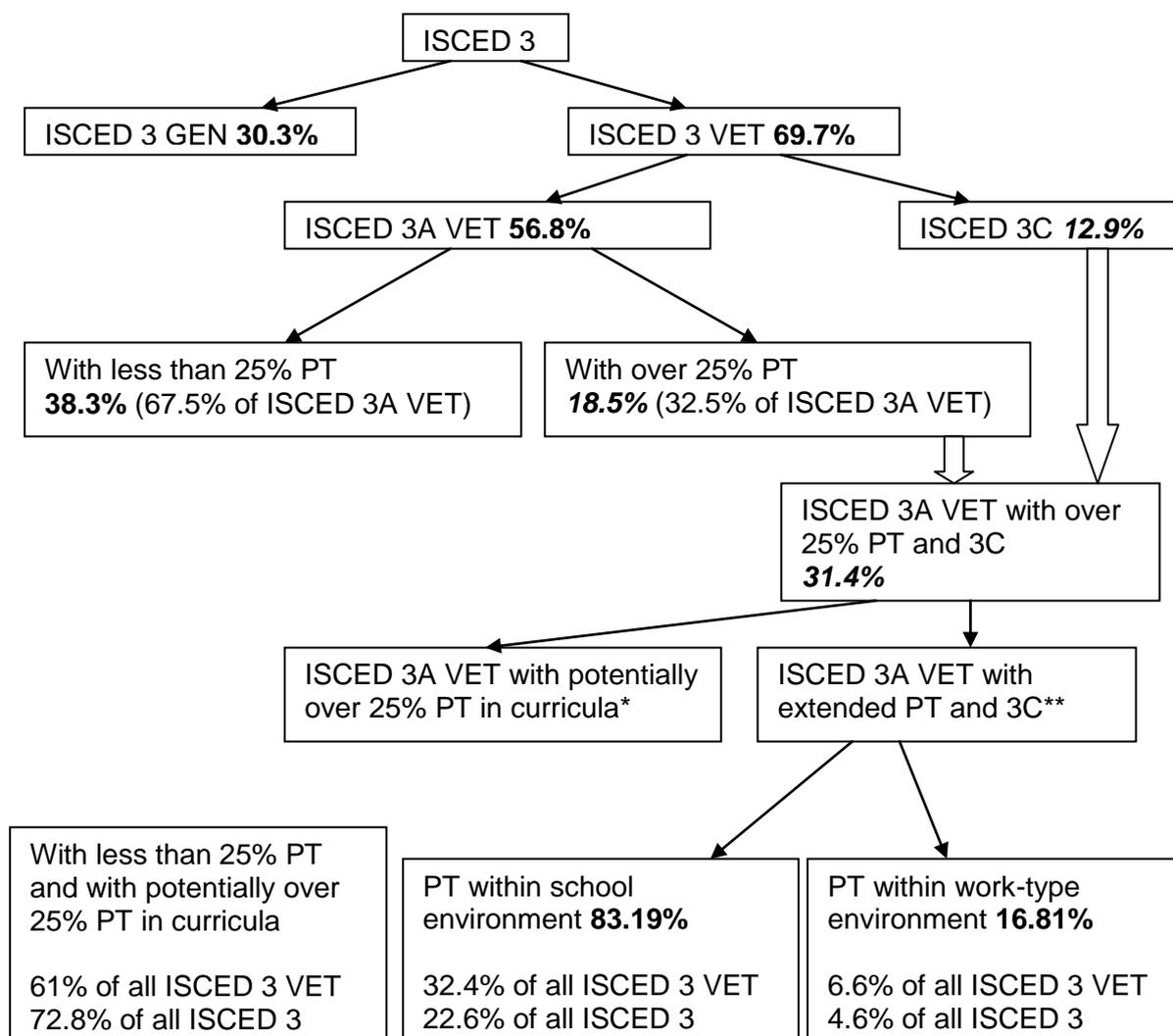
PT – Practical training.

CPT – Centre of Practical Training.

The following scheme tries to offer an overview of groups of students in ISCED 3 education with a special focus on practical training.

Scheme 1

Distribution of ISCED 3 students by programmes and provision of practical training in 2011/2012 school year



Notes:

* There are study programmes (e.g. programmes of hotel academies or mechatronic programmes) within which over 1,200 hours of practical training can be and do need not to be delivered. In a positive case students are offered a certificate of apprenticeship in addition to the “maturita” school-leaving certificate. There are no detailed data available about provision of practical education/training in contrast to the category presented in parallel (see note ** below).

** This includes ISCED 3C training programmes and ISCED 3A study programmes offering “maturita” school-leaving certificate and a certificate of apprenticeship, the so-called study programmes with extended hours of practical training. Other programmes within which at least 1,200 hours of practical training can be delivered (e.g. study programmes of hotel academies or a mechatronic programme) are disregarded, as from the legal point of view, they do not belong to the category of ISCED 3A study programmes with extended hours of practical training and, therefore, there are no detailed data about provision of practical education/ training available.

PT – Practical training.

Summary of essential information

Although there is no “ideal type of apprenticeship” in Slovakia there are some programmes within which apprenticeship-type schemes can occur. Within the same programme pure school-based practical training can be offered but also work-based learning in a work or work-like environment. It is fully up to respective VET school how the practical component of curricula is organised. Contracts allowing for placement in companies do not need to be covered by statistics, as explained earlier, and therefore only some estimation of numbers of “sort of apprentices” is available. This estimation (see subchapter Statistics) is based on aggregate data, as there is no individualised statistics available. There are three examples mentioned above that are very close to apprenticeship:

- provision of practical education/training for all programmes offered by a private Secondary Specialised School of Metallurgy Podbrezová, as the volume and quality is guaranteed by the establishing metallurgy company Železiarne Podbrezová that absorbs graduates of own school provided they do not continue their studies in higher education¹⁹;
- two pilots already in progress initiated by Volkswagen and T-systems (see Cases 7 and 8 above);
- pilots in preparation in cooperation with countries with the developed dual system and pilots within the ESF project “Development of Secondary VET” (see Annex B for further details).

A systemic change introducing “an ideal type of apprenticeship” is expected in the future based on the experience of Secondary Specialised School of Metallurgy Podbrezová and the aforementioned pilot schools.

In Volkswagen and T-systems projects a minimum entry level is ISCED 3 education, in other cases ISCED 2 education. In all but one of these cases (Volkswagen) it leads to formal qualification according to the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

Some of “apprentices” are in training leading to traditional crafts (provided their practical training is delivered in a work environment), but all new efforts to introduce apprenticeship (or even “elements of dual system”) relate to the industry. The Slovak national economy heavily depends on the export of industrial products and supply of appropriately trained young workforce is inevitable to keep competitiveness and intended growth of industry (predominantly automotive). A very promising is also an IT sector and future expansion of IT sector depends on mainstreaming of “apprenticeship” similar to the T-systems pilot.

In all but one of these cases (Secondary Specialised School of Metallurgy Podbrezová that is funded in a regular way via per capita “normatives” according to Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on

¹⁹ This private school also contains ISCED 3A VET programmes and even an ISCED 3A general education programme.

Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Establishments) funding is project based or at least partly dependent on specific stimuli from the government. Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET tries to stimulate “training for enterprises” in hope to strengthen involvement of enterprises in IVET. The following financial benefits are offered according to this act:

- VET students trained for particular company can be given motivation stipends²⁰, reward for productive work²¹ and can get covered some additional costs (e.g. accommodation, travelling, medical and psychological testing required by specific professions, as well as provision of work and protective equipment)²²;
- The aforementioned benefits are tax deductible for companies these individuals are trained for, and other expenditures aimed at provision of practical training (by VET school and/or other school establishment) are tax deductible only in case they are not covered by the contribution of the state (respective “financial normative” according to Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Establishments).

Although insufficient quality of practical training in a school environment (suffering from outdated and insufficient equipment) contributes to high unemployment rates of school graduates, the crucial problem of low employment rates is structural and in particular a result of low attractiveness of training and qualifications for working positions in the industry²³. Although provision of practical training in cooperation with companies can strengthen the quality of graduates the low attractiveness of current VET programmes and also future “apprenticeship” remain a serious problem. Improvement of career guidance and counselling is inevitable, but the crucial point is to offer stability and appropriate remuneration.

B. Specific features of discussed programmes

We have described 8 contexts within which the term “apprentice” might occur. As several times stressed it usually happens in media or in common speech, partly due to traditional training related to specific professions. From the legal point of view, there is no ideal type of apprenticeship and there are no apprenticeship-type programmes officially recognised, with the exception of pilots that, however, cover only marginal amount of students (and trainees in the case of Volkswagen).

There are some cases featuring work-based learning that are worth mentioning although they feature only some characteristics of apprenticeship. There are no doubts about the need for revival of the links between VET schools and companies. A lot of confusion is however

²⁰ It is up to 65 % of subsistence costs as specified by § 12 of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET. In the 2013/14 school year it is up to EUR 128.75 monthly.

²¹ It is 50 to 100 % of hour minimum wage as specified by § 12 of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET. In 2014 it is EUR 2.023 per hour.

²² As specified by § 13 of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET in more detail.

²³ About 320,000 new workers for industry are expected for next 5 years, according to estimations of the Automotive Industry Association (Združenie automobilového priemyslu), see <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/print.xml?path%5Barticle%5D=trhu-prace-pomozu-stotisice-novych-pracovnikov-na-masovy-nabor-sa-nechystajte>).

visible concerning the ways to revitalise traditional forms of apprenticeship in crafts that disappeared after the World War II with abolishing of the private sector, and to establish links between schools and companies broken after the 1989 privatisation of state owned companies. This confusion is visible in the calls of employers' representatives and politicians considering a pre-1989 model of VET as comparable to the dual model existing abroad. On the one hand, a pre-1989 model contained an important component of work-based learning, as former secondary vocational schools were affiliated to enterprises. On the other hand, schools and enterprises were not exposed to the challenges of market economy.

As a consequence of the collapse of the command economy affiliation of schools to companies was broken, as enterprises were not able to continue cooperation or they declared their disinterest in IVET facing a harsh period of transformation. There were only five²⁴ exceptions of a positive approach and an experiment was launched to explore the opportunity to create company-owned schools by very strong companies. This experiment was positively evaluated, but it was neither continued nor mainstreamed. Until 1995 they gradually stopped maintaining their secondary vocational schools due to non-existence of a financial scheme clarifying the contribution of the state budget and companies to IVET. No "enterprise-owned schools" were created until the first private VET school emerged in 2003 maintained by a metallurgy company Železiarne Podbrezová.

An amendment of the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET aimed at creation of a positive framework for emerging of apprenticeship and even a dual model will have to introduce fiscal stimuli for enterprises. Recent proposals have not yet been accepted by the Ministry of Finance and they seem to be more appropriate for large companies than for SMEs. For SMEs, usually short of disposable means and with low absorption of trainees compared to large companies, specific measures need to be prepared, including establishment of the infrastructure in support of managing apprenticeship. The new act of VET should be submitted to the government by the end of 2014. As already indicated earlier, the new regulatory framework is aimed at strengthening work-based learning while the status of students should be preserved and new apprentices are not expected to be employees of companies. Thus, social partners' involvement (in particular of trade unions) will be apparently lower compared to a dual model of IVET. In addition to the crucial issue of an appropriate financial scheme new forms of career guidance and counselling as well as recruiting of "apprentices" are needed. Exploring new ways in career guidance and counselling is contained in two national ESF projects launched in 2013²⁵. Making new apprenticeship attractive partly depends on the willingness of companies to take care of training of a new workforce. It is necessary to make it in a win-win way: it should lead to acquisition of attractive qualifications concurrently with attractive income for trainees, and to

²⁴ Five enterprises – the refinery Slovnaft Bratislava, the rubber plant Matador Púchov, the chemical plant Duslo Šaľa, the provider of public transport in Bratislava DPM Bratislava and the building company Hydrostav Bratislava – remained directly involved in IVET.

²⁵ See projects "Supporting Vocational Guidance of Basic School Pupils, Designing Polytechnic Education Focused on Development of Working Skills and Working with Pupils with Gifts in Technology" at <http://www.zsodborne.sk> and "Development of Secondary VET" at <http://www.rsov.sk>.

quality future workforce able to reduce remarkable costs of their training by their productive work within the final period of training²⁶.

Although there is an agreement of all stakeholders about the need to develop new curricula for practical training offered by companies or, if more appropriate, by centres of VET, there is no agreement about the ways to secure quality curricula, quality environment (equipment) and quality delivery of practical training. Current quality assurance schemes are rather traditional based on the supervision of state inspection and rather administrative forms of enlisting of programmes/schools into the respective networks.

C. Strengths and weaknesses

A stream of IVET programmes in Slovakia is among the strongest in the EU. This, together with industrial tradition and ageing in many crafts indicating soon a lack of respective services, creates positive conditions for revitalisation of apprenticeship. On the other hand, brain drain towards ISCED 3A programmes, general education and higher education, and a dramatic decline of ISCED 3C programmes indicates a fear of inhabitants from early specialisation. Although IVET is not a dead end in Slovakia and ISCED 3C graduates are offered follow-up studies to ISCED 3A level and later to tertiary education there are no appropriate post-secondary alternatives building on the experience and competences gained in ISCED 3C programmes and subsequent employment. Slovakia needs to develop German-style “Meister” programmes and tertiary non-university programmes. There are no universities of applied science and there are no bachelor studies and short-cycle higher education programmes for “practice-oriented” people.

Partners from countries with the developed dual system in VET and their papers in support of piloting stressed the importance of commitment of companies to train their future workforce. Undoubtedly, this is a key to success in introducing apprenticeship/dual training into IVET in Slovakia. In case companies will expect delivery of just in time workforce delivered by schools fitting their needs as solely responsibility of the educational sector or government, and signals of such an attitude are visible, substantial improvement can hardly be achieved. High unemployment rates of young professionals together with an unsaturated demand for the same professions is a clear signal of low quality IVET, and a criticism of schools in such cases is justified. Blaming schools for the mismatch in supply and demand in the labour market is however usually unjustified, as this kind of criticism disregards from desires and needs of individuals. This mismatch partly refers also to inability of national economy to create jobs or offer opportunities for professions in the labour market. In case of inappropriate actions to secure workforce in the industry in very high amounts, brain drain abroad that is currently among the highest in the EU can be unintentionally strengthened.

²⁶ An internal background document of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport to the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET refers to the Swiss experience and highlights that costs of training within a dual model in Switzerland are lower than company income from productive work of trainees.

Alternatives to an ideal-type of apprenticeship (that can be recommended in particular to companies owned by nationals from the countries with developed dual IVET) are apprenticeship-type schemes based on institutional contracts between schools and companies on cooperation in provision of practical training (see Case 5 above). In case of a positive financial scheme this model can prove to be an alternative to the German-style dual system as it is more compatible with a current system and less demanding transformation is needed. It is important not to endanger VET schools by shortening their budgets as a consequence of provision (some parts) of practical training outside the school²⁷ and stimulating enterprises in investment into improved learning environment including equipment serving for training of students.

D. Conclusions

Slovakia has a very strong stream of upper secondary IVET. Although apprenticeship had tradition in Slovakia it is not a systemic part of IVET now. There are no programmes corresponding to an ideal type of apprenticeship, as set by the Cedefop definition²⁸. There are however some programmes that can be seen as apprenticeship-type. Furthermore, the term apprentice (“učeň”) is used in common speech, often fully incorrectly, and sometimes in cases that refer to programmes containing practical training offered in a work-like environment or even in the workplace. In all these cases practical training is offered under the responsibility of schools and participants have a status of students. The legislation does not recognise the terms “apprentice” and “apprenticeship contracts”²⁹. This is why the ReferNet studies prefer to indicate secondary IVET in Slovakia as a typical example of school-based VET. Dissatisfaction with the quality and professional structure of graduates leads to efforts to revive links between schools and companies. Institutional contracts between schools and companies aimed at provision of practical training in companies are in increase. As a novelty influenced by international experience, there are pilots in progress to offer a compromise between recent IVET and a dual system (see Annex B). A high share of practical training based on apprenticeship contracts should be offered by companies, legislatively backed by amendment of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET. This legislation should be submitted to the government by the end of 2014. A brief summary of challenges and recent developments is offered in Annex C.

²⁷ This was often discussed in past and therefore schools can be reluctant to enter this kind of contracts and/or make them public for statistical purposes. This could be one of explanations of comparably high numbers of individuals described as apprentices in the 2008 Labour Cost Survey (see Annex A).

²⁸ See Footnote 1.

²⁹ Individualised apprenticeship contracts are a crucial feature of apprenticeship.

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Annex A

International reporting about “apprenticeship” in Slovakia

The IKEI report “Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union: final report” from January 2012³⁰ indicated that apprenticeship-type schemes at upper secondary level in Slovakia are mainly company based³¹. This statement is not justified in the study and even more, it is not true, as the Slovak IVET is a typical example of a school based system³². In addition, it is in full contradiction with other parts of the study stating that “initial vocational education and training (IVET) is school based”³³ and that “there is no typical apprenticeship training in Slovakia”³⁴. Fully surprisingly, Slovakia is also listed among the countries where “the strict-sense work-based system is the only formula to follow an apprenticeship (in the so-called dual system)”³⁵. This is also not true as Slovakia is only preparing for introduction of a dual system and it was fully unjustified to speak about an existing dual system in Slovakia in 2012. Furthermore, fully confusingly, 2,000 apprentices are indicated as “strictly apprenticeship students (according to the national criteria)” and no apprenticeship-type students “involved in mainly school-based VET training where compulsory work-based training is part of the curriculum” are indicated³⁶.

Although the study “Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: final synthesis report”³⁷ from 2012, commissioned by DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, should focus on traineeship and the difference between apprenticeship and traineeship is explained in the specific table³⁸, traineeship, apprenticeship and practical training within secondary IVET are mixed up in parts related to Slovakia³⁹. In Part 4 “Practices and content of traineeships”⁴⁰, secondary IVET is discussed, exploiting the 2008 ReferNet Slovakia country report⁴¹, however instead of referring to practical training, that is a component of ISCED 3C programmes, a different term “traineeship” complying with the focus of the study is used.

³⁰ European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2012), Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union: final report, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&visible=1>.

³¹ Ibid, see Table 2.1 Existence of apprenticeship-type schemes according to their nature (company vs. school-based) in the EU-27 countries, p. 30.

³² Interestingly, apprenticeship-type schemes at upper secondary level in the Czech Republic are indicated as mainly school based. The two IVET systems in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are still very similar due to their roots in former Czechoslovakia and both can be presented as typical examples of school based system.

³³ Ibid, p. 433.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 436.

³⁵ Ibid, see p. 30, where Slovakia is named in one group with Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia, in contrast to 3 countries, where just apprenticeship-type school based schemes exist (Czech Republic, Poland and Spain).

³⁶ Ibid, see Table 2.2 Estimate of number of students in apprenticeship-type studies by EU 27 Member States, secondary education, 2009, p. 31.

³⁷ European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2012). Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: final synthesis report, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>.

³⁸ Ibid, see Table 4.1: Apprenticeships vs. traineeships, p. 52.

³⁹ Ibid, see part National report on traineeships: Slovakia, p. 796-810.

⁴⁰ Ibid, see p. 803-804.

⁴¹ And even older sources were exploited, as visible from the reference to the Education Act No. 29/1984 Coll., although the new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. was already in force, and newer ReferNet country reports describing developments after 2008 were available.

The 2013 document “Apprenticeship and traineeship schemes in EU27: key success factors: a guidebook for policy planners and practitioners”⁴², commissioned by DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, capitalising on the two aforementioned studies, offered a summary country fiche for Slovakia containing overviews of apprenticeship-type and traineeship schemes⁴³. Nevertheless, this study subsumed under the term apprenticeship-type schemes all ISCED 3 VET programmes including those ISCED 3A programmes where graduates do not receive a certificate of apprenticeship and whose practical training is marginal in the volume of hours compared to ISCED 3C VET programmes. Moreover, statistical data about the numbers of apprentices are in harsh contradiction with statistical data from Table 4.1 in the IKEI report⁴⁴, in contrast to other countries where statistical data are in compliance.

The 2013 European Commission study “Work-based learning in Europe: practices and policy pointers”⁴⁵ offers interesting data on a share of apprentices in companies⁴⁶, according to which Slovakia belongs to strong performing EU countries with 3.6 % of apprentices in firms. With this figure Slovakia is close to the dual-system countries (Germany with 5.3 %, Austria with 4.7 %) and significantly over post-communist neighbours (the Czech Republic with 0.9 %, Poland with 0.8 % and Hungary with 0.04 %). These data stem from the 2008 Labour Cost Survey, according to which apprentice data refer to staff people who are not full- or part-time workers and who “do not participate fully in the production process of the unit because they are working under an apprentice's contract or because the fact that they are undertaking vocational training impinges significantly on their productivity”. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that people identified as apprentices in Slovak firms were employed by firms as typical for apprenticeship in the dual system. This on the other hand indicates that in the top year of the Slovak economy (before the break of the crisis) Slovak firms were open to engagement of people with no regular employment status, working under specific conditions being at the same time in education and training.

In this study, there are no statistical data about provision of work-based learning within IVET in Slovakia and there is no specific paragraph on developments in Slovakia in contrast to other countries⁴⁷. Slovakia is only mentioned among countries with a decreasing share of work-based learning in the period of 2006 – 2010⁴⁸.

All the aforementioned studies document that there is no undisputed clear understanding of IVET in Slovakia and some of studies offer a very biased picture on apprenticeship and/or apprenticeship-type schemes.

⁴² European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2013). Apprenticeship and traineeship schemes in EU27: key success factors: a guidebook for policy planners and practitioners, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11348&langId=en>.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 111-112.

⁴⁴ European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2012), Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union: final report, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&visible=1>, Table 2.2, p. 31.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture (2013). Work-based learning in Europe: practices and policy pointers, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf.

⁴⁶ Ibid, see p. 5, Figure 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid, see p. 34, Annex.

⁴⁸ Ibid, see p. 7, Table 1.

Annex B

Bottom-up reforming of IVET based on international experience

There are several initiatives in progress to strengthen practical training by introducing work-based learning or even some features of dual VET.

- The oldest project is based on a Swiss – Slovak cooperation resulting in a project “Vocational Education and Training for the Labour Market” launched in March 2012 financed by the Swiss financial instrument (Swiss – Slovak Cooperation Programme) and coordinated by the State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania), with duration until May 2016 and the budget of EUR 3,656,108. The project is aimed at enhancing the cooperation between employers and secondary VET schools in six areas of study. The project comprises 10 pilot schools and 18 partner companies (employers). Activities within the project include delivery of practical training of students of respective programmes directly in workplaces or premises of partner companies. All 10 pilot schools must conclude contracts with their partner companies (employers), for some schools it is a new experience. Some companies also conclude individual contracts with students. It could also be mentioned that project activities include development and delivery of training programmes in pedagogy focused on instructors of practical training who belong to the company staff, not to the pedagogical staff of the school;
- In February 2014 the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport signed a contract with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber represented by the Commercial Section of the Austrian Embassy on implementation of elements of dual education in Slovakia in cooperation with secondary VET schools and companies. This Austrian – Slovak project initiated in 2013 is based on a detailed feasibility study⁴⁹. Within the pilot project titled “young stars”⁵⁰ one ISCED 3C training programme and two ISCED 3A study programmes will be opened in Secondary Specialised School of Technology in Zlaté Moravce from the 2014/2015 school year, in cooperation with 6 companies. Theoretical education representing 40 % of curricula will be provided by the school and practical training representing 60 % of curricula will be delivered directly in partner companies. Companies will sign contracts on dual education with the school and individual contracts with students. Students will receive motivation stipends and remuneration for productive work. The project will also include training of instructors of practical training in companies and common recruitment activities;
- A German – Slovak project initiated by the Berlin Memorandum from December 2012 should lead to not yet specified 5 beacon projects aimed at strengthening practical training by provision of work-based learning;

⁴⁹ See Petanovitsch, A. et al (2014). Faktory úspechu pri duálnom vzdelávaní: možnosti prenosu, <http://www.minedu.sk/data/at/5842.pdf>

⁵⁰ See more on the project at http://www.sostzm.edu.sk/aktuality_dualedu.html.

- 21 VET schools nation-wide were identified within the ESF project “Development of Secondary VET” launched in March 2013 to pilot improvement of practical training and introduction of elements of dual system in cooperation of selected companies and selected sectors of economy, and capitalising on international experience. Within the project a new share of theoretical education and practical training in VET was suggested for training and study programmes to be delivered by pilot schools through the dual model. It was suggested that the balance between theoretical education (general plus vocational subjects) and practical training in school educational programmes should be as follows:

Table 4. **Share of theoretical education and practical training in IVET programmes**

Type of IVET programme	Share of TE and PT
ISCED 3C	44 % / 56 %
ISCED 3A with extended hours of practical training	52 % / 48 %
ISCED 3A	76 % / 24 %

Source: National ESF project “Development of Secondary VET”; Ladislav Kováč, internal announcement.

Note: TE – Theoretical education, PT – Practical training.

Annex C

Summary of transformation: Status and progress

Themes and challenges	Status	Progress
Attractiveness and career guidance		
Improve guidance and counselling	This is addressed by two national ESF project ⁵¹ as regard improvement of methodology, and within pilot project as regard of provision of guidance in practice ⁵² .	Expected as a consequence of the action taken; further improvement is however needed.
Improve status of apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes	Strong emphasis is put on strengthening work-based learning component of IVET.	Progress visible compared to 2012; new legislation in the pipeline.
Ensure apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes leads to formal qualifications	Currently formal qualifications are provided and in the future provision of formal qualifications is envisaged.	No specific actions needed, with one exception concerning the continuing VET programme offered by Volkswagen as described above.
Promote positive image of apprenticeship/ work-based learning towards parents and learners	Importance of promotion is recognised and stressed, supported <i>inter alia</i> by a brochure given at disposal to all basic schools ⁵³ .	Further improvement is needed, impact is still insufficient.
Expand the choices for apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes - Up-scale programmes	Such an expansion is urgently needed, as recent changes (and pilots) only affect a few selected programmes.	Progress is visible in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, less visible in other sectors.
Design and test pilot system level schemes/programmes	Pilots are in progress (see Annex B).	Recent development is very promising, chances for successful mainstreaming are not yet clear.
Support for companies, in particular SMEs		
Improve awareness of apprenticeship/ work-based	There are no sufficient benefits for companies. There	Improvement is expected from amendment of

⁵¹ See projects "Supporting Vocational Guidance of Basic School Pupils, Designing Polytechnic Education Focused on Development of Working Skills and Working with Pupils with Gifts in Technology" at <http://www.zsodborne.sk> and "Development of Secondary VET" at <http://www.rsov.sk>.

⁵² E.g. a promotional CD was prepared within the Swiss – Slovak cooperation project "Vocational Education and Training for the Labour Market" mentioned in Annex B.

⁵³ See brochure Zo školy do zamestnania, <http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/5839.pdf>

learning programmes benefits	were proposals of benefits for companies already elaborated and discussed between employers' representatives and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. Specific support for SMEs has not yet been substantially discussed.	Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET.
Provide financial and non-financial support	See above.	See above.
Set up joint training centres in support of groups of SMEs that would work together	Not yet discussed.	Could be addressed by amendment of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET.
Administrative simplification for accreditation and placement	Not yet relevant.	Not yet relevant.
Governance		
Enhance governance system and regulatory framework/Review design, governance and monitoring	Already in process of changes. A specific agency as a public body in support of implementing elements of a dual system is promoted by employers.	Further improvement expected from amendment of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET and some other education sector legislation already in the pipeline.
Participation of social partners and other stakeholders	Permanently improving.	Sufficiently backed by current legislation.
Undertake national policy dialogue leading to partnerships, and/or legal frameworks for apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes (between education, employment and economic authorities, social partners, businesses, VET providers, and intermediary organisations)	Policy making including a national policy dialogue is improving, as visible <i>inter alia</i> from composition of a working group preparing amendment of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET that contains representatives of all social partners.	Progress visible.
Involve companies in curriculum design and review	Partly hampered by a lack of specialists on the side of employers; capacity building rather than changes in legislation are needed.	Improvement is urgently needed, <i>inter alia</i> , making use of international cooperation.
Reference qualifications from apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes to NQF	Not yet in place.	Expected to materialise as a consequence of further progress in development of NQF.

Quality assurance in apprenticeship		
Ensure quality learning outcomes	Learning outcomes have been identified within school based IVET. Revision and/or new identification of learning outcomes for practical training within new programmes is needed.	Progress envisaged <i>inter alia</i> within two national ESF projects ⁵⁴ .
Develop standards and assessment approaches	As above.	As above.
Linking public funding to quality standards	Not yet in place.	Some changes are expected from new financial schemes to be developed in 2014. New legislation should be developed in 2014 however fundamentals are not yet clear.
Validation and recognition of competences/qualifications	Not relevant yet. Changes are expected within introducing elements of a dual system. No improvement yet concerning recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.	New legislation regulating recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning should be developed in 2014.
Establish a credit system for apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes	Not put on the table.	Not considered relevant and urgent.
Innovative or special apprenticeship initiatives		
Promote apprenticeship/ work-based learning programmes at tertiary level	Not yet systemic part of tertiary education ⁵⁵ .	Further improvement is needed.
Increase chances for specific targets (disadvantaged groups, etc.)	Not yet addressed.	Improvement is needed.

⁵⁴ See "Development of the National Qualifications Framework" at <http://www.tvorbansk.sk> and "Development of Secondary VET" at <http://www.rsovs.sk>.

⁵⁵ There are only specific cases cooperation of companies and schools (e.g. ISCED 5B computer systems programme that is however not officially recognised as tertiary, and Master programme developed in cooperation of Volkswagen and the Slovak University of Technology that contains an important component of practical training but cannot be seen as genuine apprenticeship programme).