

Slovakia: COVID-19: there is no evil without some good

The combined challenge of COVID-19 restrictions and digitalisation resulted in a valuable bottom-up initiative. A Slovakian petrochemical giant understood the importance of investing in the training of new professionals – chemist operators, as well as in retraining VET teachers and trainers during hard times. Starting under modest amateur conditions, a new professional video studio is now in place to serve learners within the transnational [MOL Group](#).

‘First aid’ in times of trouble

In March 2020, at the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, [Slovnaft](#), a large enterprise with 3 300 employees, which exports to almost 40 countries, had to ensure the urgent education of future production operators. A training workplace was created in the form of an improvised video studio. In the beginning, without relevant technology, simple presentations of lower technical quality were created to help learners, including VET teachers and trainers, continue their learning process. Already at the beginning of the initiative, the online course – intended for teachers of laboratory exercises and trainers of professional training – attracted enormous interest. During the critical time of the lockdown, more than 500 teachers and trainers were able to attend retraining composed of five-part videos focusing on regulations and work with dangerous chemical factors. A certificate of completion was issued by Slovnaft upon successful completion of the training.

Gradual expansion

The recordings gradually expanded to include lectures by specialists from production practice. Animations and an interactive whiteboard were used to make the training more attractive. In total, more than 100 complex video lessons were filmed. Although they were originally intended for the education of newly recruited employees, they were also used in a range of lower and upper secondary programmes, in universities, in school projects, during student excursions, or during corporate development activities. The great success of the initial recordings led to the creation of a separate database, which is currently accessible to all employees and cooperating schools.

Promising future

Mikuláš Bartal, project manager in ‘Business Excellence – Education’ in Slovnaft and former trainer at a secondary VET school, shares his insights about what changed during COVID-19:

‘Despite the lockdown, we tried to keep alive all previous cooperation projects and, therefore, it was necessary to transform them partially or wholly into an online format. We were pleasantly surprised to see that participation in projects increased significantly, meaning that the new format brought great success. Many forms of future cooperation will therefore continue in the recently established electronic mode.’

He is very enthusiastic about the future of professional video tutoring and expects that the valuable and attractive learning materials will continue to be created for students, teachers and trainers of secondary VET schools in Slovakia focusing on chemistry. In addition, as part of a specialised project, the translation of learning materials in the languages of all member countries of the MOL Group is envisaged.

'Slovnaft to young people', a new booklet providing information about the possibilities of cooperation, scholarship programmes, competitions, summer schools, excursions, and practice directly in the refinery was published in November 2022.

Read more

- [Slovnaft website](#)

Juraj Vantuch, vantuch2011@gmail.com; Dagmar Jelinkova, dagmar.jelinkova@siov.sk