

Consultation process on education and training systems reform launched in Slovakia

A new education strategy paper 'Learning Slovakia' is under development in Slovakia. Two discussion papers were prepared by a working group of seven independent experts, and already published on the Education Ministry portal – the first one focusing on regional schooling and VET¹, and the second one on higher education². The third one aimed at lifelong learning is envisaged. The 2030 objectives, identified to picture the future of education, were subjected to the first phase of the consultation process: Round tables with experts and stakeholders representatives were finished in December 2016.

The following are the VET related objectives contained in the 'Learning Slovakia' discussion papers:

- VET system meets the requirements of information society and new technologies (Industry 4.0 challenge is reflected);
- A consistent system of vocational education and training of young labour force is developed by synthesising country tradition and foreign experience (a new synthesis making use of best practices of German, French and Anglo-Saxon systems);
- Exams leading to attaining an education level or awarding a qualification are institutionally separated from acquiring a certificate on completion of study;
- The National Qualifications System is functionally interlinked with the National System of Occupations; it responds to its changes by making the qualification system more flexible, i.e. by developing qualification units that can build up into larger qualifications, as well as new qualifications corresponding to labour market needs;
- Collection of data on assertion of graduates on the labour market (graduates' tracking) is institutionally secured;
- IVET capacities are regulated indirectly taking account of the data provided by a functioning system of indicative labour market needs estimates;
- A share of work-based learning increases as a consequence of supporting contracts between schools and employers on provision of practical education, and by expansion of dual VET;
- Professionalization and in-service training of staff involved in practical training of students are consistent with technological progress in the business sphere and respond to labour market requirements;
- Higher education institutions cooperate with employers in the development of education allowing students to acquire the skills needed in the labour market through work-based learning and expansion of professionally oriented bachelor studies.

A policy paper encompassing agreed objectives and detailed measures will be submitted to the government and to the parliament in 2017, after the second phase of the consultation process open to the public to agree both goals and ways to achieve them. It is expected that political parties will also try to agree on the goals. This is why the 2030 objectives were presented to the parliament education committee before opening the consultation process. Writers of discussions papers and the architects of the consultation process hope that it will be possible 'to make a new parliamentary elections boring with regard to education policy priorities'.

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¹ See at <http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/10448.pdf>.

² See at <http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/10640.pdf>.