

## Slovakia: graduate supply and demand mismatch

The country's first ever data comparing secondary and higher education graduates' fields of study and their jobs/positions have been [published](#). They were made available by [Trexima Ltd.](#), a company that develops forecasts for public authorities.

Put simply, only 20 % of secondary education graduates accepted jobs or positions fully, and another 20 % partly, corresponding to the programmes they had completed (Figure 1). The pattern for higher education graduates differs slightly, with 25 % fully and a little less than 20 % partially matching their education (Figure 2). These data present the situation more than five years after graduation; they only differ by a few percentage points from those related to less than five years after graduation.

### Correspondence between education and jobs more than five years after graduation

Figure 1 – Secondary education graduates

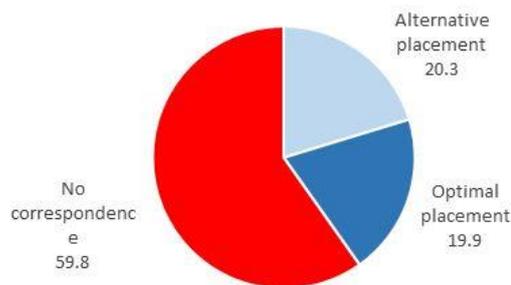
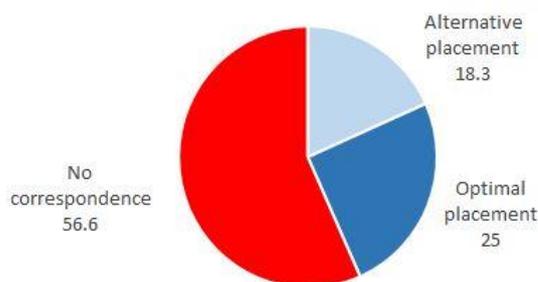


Figure 2 – Higher education graduates



Source: Trexima Ltd.

Several questions emerged when looking at the mismatch figure of about 60 % in both secondary and higher education:

- is it possible to interpret this high mismatch in terms of ineffectively spent means, as economists love to do? ([1])
- how many of those in a 'mismatch' belong to the 'hard core' being classified this way without any doubts, and how many of them acquired unique and important

competences that were relevant and useful while moving away from the original occupation they were trained for?

- how many of those in a 'mismatch' changed their career due to *force majeure* and/or unpredictable changes in life?
- how many of those in a 'mismatch' are pathfinders signalling new trends in the labour market?

Without doubt, these data are both interesting and alarming, but risk being overrated by policy makers. More data, including tracer studies are needed to understand better the different reasons leading to this kind of mismatch:

- comparison at macro level between fields of education codes and those of occupations, i.e. ISCO codes, needs to be complemented with micro analysis focusing on individual skills, particularly those best portable/transferable. This will also help to understand better new challenges emerging from digitalisation and automation;
- caution should apply when proceeding with efforts to regulate access to education focused on labour market needs; other mechanisms should be employed first:
  - improved career guidance and counselling in lower secondary schools: potentially one day per week that counsellors could dedicate to services for learners, coordinating career skills education and assisting school/business cooperation;
  - tax incentives for any kind of cooperation between companies and schools to assist learners to understand the world of work better;
  - tax incentives for all modes of work based learning offered by companies.

Further measures to help prevent future mismatch would be

- introduce dual VET combined with employment of learners;
- consider reducing provision of too specialised and narrow school based IVET programmes;
- introduce measures that prevent weakening outcome standards, such as by making a difference between certification of a completed programme and certification of qualification/level of education.

These proposals are among many others contained in the *Learning Slovakia* strategy, completed after a year and a half of work and two rounds of public consultations in autumn 2017 ([2]).

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[1] Unofficial estimation of costs of the mismatch between education and placement is EUR 250 million per year.  
[2] [Učiace sa Slovensko](#) [Learning Slovakia] strategy paper for education reform, VET strategy on pages 125-172.