

A bridge to the future
European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10
National policy report – Slovakia

This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. ReferNet is a European network of national networks providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The report has been produced by ReferNet Slovakia as a contribution to Cedefop's fourth policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

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The report was written by

Juraj Vantuch

Dagmar Jelínková

with direct contributions from

Eneke Hanzelová

Miloš Novák

Proofreading

Danica Brendzová

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Preface

The Copenhagen process was launched by the Copenhagen Declaration, approved by the representatives of ministries responsible for VET in 31 European countries on 30th November 2002. Copenhagen process policy priorities were further revisited in the Maastricht Communiqué (2004), the Helsinki Communiqué (2006) and the Bordeaux Communiqué (2008). This report examines the response of Slovakia to the Copenhagen process and the VET related components of Education and Training 2010 programme. Furthermore it reflects developments in vocational education and training system in Slovakia in the context of the progress in transition of Slovakia to the market driven economy and the democratic country.

First two chapters therefore offer a background analysis of socioeconomic challenges for VET development including the first impact of the economic crisis. Subsequent chapters look back on the past 8 years of the development with regard to the following themes:

- Impact and implications of the joint work on European principles and tools;
- Strengthening links between VET and the labour market;
- Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship;
- Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation;
- Financing VET.

In contrast to these chapters, the needed progress in modernising Slovak and European VET systems in the future is tackled and priorities for future cooperation are discussed in chapter nine. The last chapter offers bibliographic data and other supportive information for readers and all experts wishing to join the work in improvement of VET in Slovakia.

Juraj Vantuch

National ReferNet coordinator

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1. Socioeconomic challenges for future VET policy

1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

Globalisation is usually perceived as being driven by economic interests of major players, and often reduced to international companies in need of new markets and new profits. There are, however, also other factors, genuinely socio-cultural, accompanying the most visible economic factor of globalisation.

When seen in its dominant economic context, globalisation is about removing barriers among countries in order to facilitate the flow of capital, goods, services and labour force. Removing such barriers provides for challenges and opportunities. The point that needs to be discussed is whether it is possible to manage globalisation, and if yes, what it means from the small country point of view, and furthermore, whether such management was successful. Slovakia is an example of controversial results.

Restructuring economy in the early 1990s was a process marked by privatisation, decentralisation and deregulation, following neoliberal economic paradigm as in other former communist countries in transition. In the late 1990s and early 2000s globalisation was superimposed by the European agenda. Although different in details, European integration was a response to globalisation challenge and at the same time the manifestation of globalisation forces. Ending years of the last decade were marked by joining Eurozone and all crucial policies since 2002 have been subordinated to achieving the Maastricht criteria. It must be stressed here that fulfilment of all requirements necessary for a country in accession into the EU, and later to join the Eurozone, indirectly and unintended imposed hard conditions on other national policies – in particular tightening fiscal policy led and still leads to continuation of insufficient investment in education.

Slovakia successfully managed transition to market driven economy and democratic society, together with an additional challenge - building new state institutions. Accession into EU, entering OECD and joining Eurozone is a remarkable success driven by rush progressing according the aforementioned neoliberal restructuring paradigm. Benefits of globalisation are visible in booming economy after the accession into EU, with 10.6 % GDP growth in a top year 2007. But there are also costs of globalisation visible among others in critical situation in human resources. The new freedom with new opportunities and a long period of painful transformation, in particular in the 1990s, caused dramatic demographic changes. A rapid decline of live-births was seen in 1990 replaced by a slight increase since 2003. This resulted in a number of young children and children in pre-school age, and ageing of the population (see chapter 1.3). Furthermore, the country sees a large labour migration. The number of Slovak citizens working abroad peaked with 200 000-230 000 people at the end of 2007, according to estimations, and 185 700 (and 7.74 % out of the total labour force), according to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (LFS 2007 4th quarter). In contrast to this, the inflow of foreign workers was very low, about 10 000 registered workers by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family at the end of 2007 and thus corresponding to less than 5 % of the estimated outflow abroad. For Slovak citizens the most attractive destinations are the Czech Republic with 72 900 and Great Britain with 29 700 people abroad, according to the Statistical Office (LFS 2007 4th quarter). While a high share of people working in the neighbouring Czech Republic are of middle age, taking care of their families and looking for better jobs in a better paying country with no language barrier, workers in UK are predominantly young people exploring new opportunities. In addition, there are increasing numbers of students at foreign universities, about 20 000 just in the Czech Republic (see

chapter 5.1). Thus, resuming all this, Slovakia is facing a serious problem of human resources in the future – a lack of professionals available to replace aging professionals due to the population decline, and a double brain drain to better paying working positions abroad and to better paying private sector within the country. The crisis in the health sector is already dramatically visible from a lack of staff in hospitals (see Parliament breaks a taboo: tax incentives for lifelong learning In: Cedefop Info 1/2008) and a crisis in the education sector, partly hidden, is visible from the ageing of teachers and the decrease of quality of education. The decrease of quality, forecasted since the late 1990s, but ignored by authorities, is confirmed not just by subjective reporting from schools, but also by international comparisons (e.g. dramatic worsening in mathematics, according to TIMSS and poor results in PISA (see chapter 5.1). The research sector, for a long period underfinanced, is also suffering from ageing and non-competitive salaries, and young researchers see their chances abroad.

Investment in human resources is comparably lower to other EU countries and far behind the comparably powerful economies and even behind the EU27 average, as visible in the table below.

Table 1.1: Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions* per pupil/student compared to GDP per capita

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
EU27	24.6	24.9	25.1	24.7	25.3	25.2	25.0
SK	17.8	18.3	20.2	21.0	19.9	19.6	18.5

Source: Eurostat

Note: * for all levels of education combined, based on full-time equivalents

Slovakia seems to be on the trajectory of future decline due to the mismanagement of human resources. All Slovak governments fighting with the need to restructure economy, and in particular with the high unemployment deforming citizen's lives as well as political life for over a decade, failed to counterbalance the pressure of globalisation powers. Although Slovakia still belongs to the countries with the youngest age structure compared to other EU countries, it apparently fails to offer opportunities for young people to study in quality schools and to work in attractive positions for competitive wages in Slovakia.

Slovakia developed to the extremely open economy (about 80 % of GDP from export of goods and services), living from export of slow moving consumer goods, predominantly from the automotive and electro sectors with a low demand for high skilled professionals. Restructuring of economy was marked by a lack of domestic capital and therefore it was dominantly driven by foreign investors' interests. Having an industrial tradition and a surplus of skilled unemployed workers since 1990, Slovakia attracted foreign investors by low wages, low taxes and political stability in the 2000s. This shaped Slovakia into a country with the dominant assembly industry at risk of closing plants and moving them to countries with lower wages in the near future. This has already partly happened (affecting the textile industry, shoemaking and car making suppliers) after adoption of Euro. As a consequence of the comparably strong Euro/Slovak Crown conversion rate adopted by joining the Eurozone, and later under the pressure of the demand decline caused by the 2008 crisis, some plants production become noncompetitive in contrast to other countries.

Further restructuring of economy and turning political rhetoric on knowledge economy into practice is inevitable, otherwise the globalisation powers will find equilibrium at the costs of living standards of Slovak citizens living in Slovakia, with the high skilled labour force migrating abroad. Nevertheless, this second way of restructuring seems to be even harder to

manage, as Slovakia is still a capitalist country with the dead capital market and without the capital to start investment in the infrastructure necessary for knowledge economy. The country is unable to redistribute state budget expenditures to favour investment in education and research and development. It continues to be insufficient despite the large modernisation debt from the past. Despite declarations about the importance of knowledge economy for the future, the country continues to attract investors with low added value products, interested in ISCED 3 level labour force ready to work for still comparably low wages. Even worse, the country dominant industries produce slow moving consumer goods (cars and their supplies, LCD panels) making the country sensitive to the consumption power of importing countries and vulnerable to the crisis in large EU countries. Transnational companies still see Slovakia as a country offering benefits predominantly from the low cost labour force (compared to EU15 countries), lagging behind in development, and in fact not much different from developing countries. Unfortunately, attracting investors looking for low cost high skilled professionals for a high value added production is insufficiently promoted. To be honest, it is still much cheaper for international companies to attract these professionals to work abroad, than to offshore the high value added production to a country with deteriorating tertiary studies and VET. Small victories can be seen in the IT sector, where foreign investors already contributed to the job growth, but the future of this segment is also endangered by the gradual deterioration of education in mathematics and informatics.

Slovakia must seriously rethink its development strategy and pursue a new way in investment in people. Values of entrepreneurship and hard work must be brought back and instilled to young generation, if already not too late, due to the period of adoration of easy money making presented as a real value of capitalism in a wild period of transition in the 1990s. The investment in improvement in learning environment and in facilitation of learning for all people believing in learning as the value itself and the precondition of future success must be accompanied by improved policies. Seed capital from structural funds must be seen as complementary to the local sources and allocation of means better programmed and monitored. The poison of the wild privatisation of 1990s not much different from the feudal style of granting fiefs to loyal individuals and of “specific entrepreneurship” of many other easy-money-makers must be eliminated from the nation’s body. It has not been sufficiently studied yet, how splitting the country in a thin layer of winners and a dominant share of losers changed the behaviour of people originally looking for the freedom and the rush improvement of living standards based on a hard work in 1989. It is possible, and worth serious research, that later developments in the 1990s broke the backbone of the nation; as its belief in hard working as the way to prosperity has been shaken substantially. Unfortunately, many policy makers, in particular macroeconomists, are unable to see the hidden losses (not easy to translate into prices), caused by the frustration of globalisation losers. Furthermore, the impact of many “not internalised externalities” is left out of consideration and forgotten within public financing. The dramatically deteriorated status of teachers and trainers, despite some improvements still very badly equipped schools in ramshackle facilities, inability of authorities to support doing research as a precondition (i.e. in introducing reforms in curricula) and subsequently for corrective interventions, makes the early revitalisation in human resource development unlikely. The role of school as a vehicle of future success is dramatically diminished. Unfortunately, there are also new additional new sources of negative message. Elderly people, often facing insecure future after retirement, and low skilled unemployed, often from populated families, who are an important source of influence on young generation in particular in rural areas of low local opportunities, might spread wrong signals to their sprouts due to their misfortune.

Globalisation, however, has not yet affected the VET system in a direct way. Changes in curricula and pedagogies can be seen as reflecting international changes; however, it is dominantly a result of the international research and international discourse of experts and

practitioners rather than a result of globalisation forces. These are, however, gradually increasingly influencing the sectoral structure of VET, some study programmes are in decrease due to the diminishing demand (the textile industry being the most visible example). In contrast, globalisation forces bringing the newest technology in some sectors positively affect also VET provision, as new technologies require substantial adjustment of VET provision. The automotive industry increasingly cooperating with IVET is the most visible example of a positive impact of globalisation in provision of VET. This, however, does not prevent globalisation forces from local distortions, as short-term profits rather than long-term efficiency in human resource development is achieved. It is visible from over-qualification and brain drain on the one hand, and a huge mismatch between the demand and supply on the labour market, resulting not just from the weak anticipation of skill needs, but also from the skill demand subordinated to the global planning of strategic investors. The increasing power of businesses and employers also clearly visible from the new Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET is unfortunately accompanied with the diminishing autonomy of VET schools and subsequently decreasing status of teachers and trainers in VET. In contrast, a role of teachers and trainers in CVET, and in particular of specialists offering individualised and targeted training (and coaching) of medium and top managers, is enhancing and their status is improving.

There is no specific VET related measure responding to globalisation. There is, however, a policy paper aimed at the elaboration of national strategy responding inter alia to globalisation and partly also indicating responses to challenges with regard to VET. See the example below:

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Strategy for development of Slovak society and launching a discussion among professionals and public</p> <p>The document was adopted by the government on 10th March 2010.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)</p> <p>The document was elaborated within the project Vision and Strategy for Development of Slovak Society launched by the Slovak government in October 2006. The government asked for elaboration of background documents and subsequent strategy paper to face challenges of globalisation, sustainable development and transition to knowledge-based economy. The responsibility for the development of the present strategy was assigned to the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), namely the Institute of Economic Research of SAS. The strategy was elaborated by the team of leading experts from various Slovak institutions, in particular the SAS institutes and the University of Economics in Bratislava.</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>This strategy paper follows the Long-Term Vision of the Development of Slovak Society prepared in 2008, which introduced the key objectives of Slovak society - the orientation towards creating preconditions for developing knowledge economy and society, and creating conditions for life quality and sustainability in a form of knowledge-social model.</p>

The presented strategy intends to introduce the ways and instruments for implementation of these objectives.

(c) Target groups

No specific target groups are intended due to comprehensiveness and overarching character of the document.

(d) Status of implementation

The project Vision and Strategy for Development of Slovak Society was launched by the Slovak Government in October 2006. The strategy paper Long-Term Vision of the Development of Slovak Society was submitted in 2008. The presented strategy was submitted to public discussion on 9th March and discussed at the government meeting on 10th March 2010.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The strategy addresses the Slovak society as a whole.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

It is a paper with an ambition to provide an overwhelming strategy of the country development in the following decade.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Slovak Academy of Sciences;
- Central governmental and regional/local authorities.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The paper was newly developed and submitted for public discussion and therefore its impact cannot be assessed yet. Nevertheless, action plans with clearly identified measures with measurable impact indicators need to be prepared.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

Not set yet.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

It is a policy document aimed at the adoption of an overarching approach with the further impact on all level policies.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

There have been no substantial obstacles encountered and only two points are worth mentioning. The document was elaborated

- in the period of financial and subsequent economic crisis and this may lead to questioning the paper in the future, as a consequence of changes and even turbulences hitting the country;
- under the lead of SAS economists and subjected to criticism as insufficiently reflecting other social sciences' points of view, and insufficiently attracting the experts outside SAS.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The aforementioned action plans need to be elaborated, otherwise this strategy paper can hardly be efficiently translated into practice.

5. Source, legend

The strategy is available at

<http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=14619>

1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

It is inevitable to adjust the VET system to technological progress. Although it is recognised by authorities, there were no specific measures in support of this for a long period. As documented later, Slovakia is among countries insufficiently investing in human resources and the education sector is underfinanced with accumulated, partly hidden, modernisation debt. There were no public sources available for modernisation, and lagging behind in ICT use in education was a significant example of this trend. A very well developed Infovek project failed to bridge a digital divide, exactly due to the lack of means, as no private sources were included in funding of this programme. Only later, programmes elaborated and cofunded from private sources led to the substantial improvement of the ICT equipment of schools and wiring schools to Internet (see PCs for schools: from rhetoric to reality. In: Cedefop Info 2/2004). Similarly, after a long period of deterioration the improvement of VET school equipment started to improve based on the private support from businesses recognising the importance of substantial improvement of IVET. A long-term period of a failure of public policies to respond to technological progress in IVET is partially corrected by private investment (in the case of growing sectors) and funding from European projects (especially for lagging regions).

Disparity in equipment of VET schools varies territorially and sectorally. In sectors as well as in the areas with a weak infrastructure not interesting for international investors, VET schools continue to suffer from lagging in technology. A gradual improvement is expected from the Centres of VET established according to the Act on VET (see chapter 6.2). Undoubtedly, sectoral and territorial coverage of the country by quality schools and training centres for teachers and trainers is a positive feature, however, there is also a criticism aired that this can be made at the expense of other schools deteriorating even more, as these VET centres are much more costly. A dramatic change in the VET governance introduced by the Act on VET,

significantly strengthening the influence of employers on VET, is also partly caused by understanding of educational authorities that it is impossible to respond to the rapid technological progress without private initiatives. The VET Fund, also introduced by this act, is a long awaited instrument for cofunding VET from private sources. However, it is considered very controversial and not seen as being able to provide for the significant inflow of cofunding VET from private sources (see the part on reform of governance and management in chapter 4.3).

Technological changes have also an influence on curricula and provision of training of teachers and trainers. In contrast to provision of better equipment; changes in programming VET and professionalisation of staff are less sensitive to funding. A permanent innovation of curricula is visible in the 2000s. There were 267 curricula innovated in 2003-2008, as presented in Table 7.1. Furthermore, since the 2008/2009 school year brand new curricula started to emerge as a consequence of curriculum decentralisation. Numbers of new curricula offering the frame for elaboration of school educational programmes broken by ISCED are visible in the table below.

Table 1.2: Number of state educational programmes (SEP) by ISCED levels in 2009

	ISCED 2C	ISCED 3C	ISCED 3A	ISCED 4A	ISCED 5B	Total
SEP	9	16	20	23	14	82

Source: State Institute of Vocational Education

Furthermore, all state educational programmes are currently being updated to comply in detail with the newly adopted legislation and policies, and with changes resulting from the progress in the educational reform. Moreover, two new state educational programmes are being developed, one for the Metallurgy programmes at ISCED 3C level, resulting from the requirement of U.S. Steel to launch ISCED 3C training programmes, and one for the Technical and Applied Chemistry programmes at ISCED 5B level. One state educational programme focused at Metallurgy at ISCED 5B was cancelled, as there are no study branches at this level listed anymore. In total, final 83 state educational programmes were developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education and submitted to the National Council of VET for commenting and subsequent issuing by the Ministry of Education.

1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia has experienced a huge decrease in birth rate and ageing of the population. Live births declined from 80 116 in 1989 to 50 841 in 2002, followed by a slight year-on-year increase. Live births currently amounted to 61 217 in 2009.

Slovakia currently enjoys favourable old age dependency in comparison to EU27 average, however gradual deterioration is expected: by about 4 percentage points on a five year period basis (up to 39.98 % compared to EU27 45.36 % in 2040), followed by accelerated worsening by about 8 percentage points on a five year period basis. Old-age dependency ratio is expected to be over EU27 average since 2050.

A demographic trend broken down by age groups offered in Table 1.3 indicates the downward trend, the need for further restructuring of school networks, and the decrease of labour force supply in the future.

Table 1.3: Age-specific demographic trends by age groups until 2025

	Total	0-24			25-59			60+		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1989	5287663	2145137	1094119	1051018	2362473	1168836	1193637	780053	323540	456513
1989 (%)	100	40.57	20.69	19.88	44.68	22.10	22.57	14.75	6.12	8.63
2010	5423703	1579076	807547	771529	2864766	1435228	1429538	979861	393065	586796
2010 (%)	100	29.11	14.89	14.23	52.82	26.46	26.36	18.07	7.25	10.82
2025	5521745	1381445	705247	676198	2744841	1397247	1347594	1395459	596860	798599
2025 (%)	100	25.02	12.77	12.25	49.71	25.30	24.41	25.27	10.81	14.46

Source: Statistical Office (1989 data) and INFOSTAT 2007 update of demographic prognosis 2002

In VET schools a demographic decline, together with per capita financing and the surplus of places at higher status ISCED 3A VET and ISCED 3A general education study branches caused the low enrolment in lower status studies, in particular blue collar ISCED 3C training branches. It is to a large extent a consequence of failures to counterbalance per capita financing, which stimulated schools at risk of low enrolment to disregard from labour market needs and quality standards of graduates by the efficient quality assurance policies. A lack of work force supply in the future is in addition worsened by the large migration of workers from Slovakia into better paying countries and a comparably low inflow of foreign workers in Slovakia. There were 129 000 labour emigrants from Slovakia in 2009 dropping from about 177 200 in the top of the boom in EU in 2007, and there were just 15 264 foreigners employed in Slovakia in December 2009. Furthermore, Slovakia is not attractive for asylum seekers as well as not able to attract new citizens. There were only 366 citizenships in total awarded in 2009. A preliminary increase in applications for asylum granting in the early 2000s was caused by the temporary increase of attractiveness of Slovakia as the EU pre-accession country (see part on migrants in chapter 5.1). There were only 558 asylum and 204 citizenships granted to asylum seekers since the origination of independent Slovakia, thus since 1993 to April 2010, according to the Ministry of Interior data.

There are no examples of initiatives directly addressing the demographic decline worth stressing as good practice examples. Although a decrease in student enrolment in VET is observed, the VET stream in Slovakia is still large due to tradition. Nevertheless, an insufficient supply of ISCED 3C VET graduates, as well as a shift from entering ISCED 3A VET studies towards ISCED 3A general studies, contributed to dramatic legislative changes, in particular to the adoption of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET (see the example of initiative in chapter 4.3). The National VET Council, set up according to this act, is responsible, according to Article 2(e) of its statute, for elaboration of a plan of promotion of VET. The first plan was adopted at the Council meeting on 30th March 2010. The following are some of the most interesting activities:

Specific training branches were identified for promotion through the well-known portals www.azet.sk, www.cas.sk, www.zoznam.sk to promote them and to present, in cooperation with professional associations, advantages of respective professions. Furthermore, in the weekly Hospodárske noviny (the most-read economic print medium) one page promotion of at the labour market demanded professions of respective national economy sectors was published. Moreover, open days in two large enterprises for 14-15 years old students facing the decision about their secondary studies, as well as the orientation seminars for basic school pedagogical staff in three regions, were selected as pilots worth mainstreaming in the future.

Not immediately, but in a near future, an additional new legislation, Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, can contribute to the increase of VET related competences and VET qualifications of adults (including migrants). The Act on Lifelong Learning opened at least partly (see the example of initiative in chapter 3.1) the door for recognition and validation of prior learning and for the first time in the VET history, partial qualifications will be

recognised within the National System of Qualifications. Consequently, adults in a need of new qualification can be reprofiled easier in the future.. Furthermore, although without an agreement on a supportive measure yet, the Ministry of Education set a new national benchmark to increase the participation of 25-64 years old population in lifelong learning up to 15 % in 2015.

1.4 Impact of greening of economy on VET

Creating new jobs and greening the economy is often seen contradictory in policy practice in contrast to policy rhetoric, as green jobs are still more available within the public sector. Although the importance to fight against the climate change and introduce clean technologies creating less waste is commonly shared, the implementation into practice is very slow. In particular, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and supporting renewable energies prove to be resistant to new policies, in contrast to partial success in waste management.

The Strategy for Development of Slovak Society was adopted by the government on 10th March 2010 based on the earlier Long-Term Vision of the Development of Slovak Society, prepared in 2008 by a team of experts under the institutional supervision of Slovak Academy of Sciences. Although greening economy issues are reflected in several parts of this strategy, there is no measure identified with regard to this in its chapter 5 titled Strategy of Development of Knowledge-Based Economy and Society, addressing education and research and development as vehicles of further progress. Thus, no strategic break can be expected in the nearest future and only partial changes seem to be introduced - in particular those that are not costly.

It is unlikely that greening the economy is possible without investment in green technologies and of course investment in VET to master them. The experience in Slovakia concerning investment in education (see Table 1.1 and chapter 8 for further details) signals that it is unlikely to expect the significant increase of investment in support of greening the education in content and technologies.

The minister of education and minister of environment joined the 2005 Vilnius Initiative and the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development promoted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The National Action Plan for Sustainable Development for 2005-2010 was adopted by the Government Resolution No. 574/2005, replacing older policy papers. With regard to education (point 1.8) the development of the strategy for environmental education resulting in innovations in curricula in all formal education levels, as well as a renewal of environmental education in LLL, was demanded. Slovakia established a multi-partisan commission on Education for sustainable development. The commission elaborated the 2006 Concept Paper for the Environmental Education aimed at all formal education levels as well as LLL, followed by a detailed Action Plan specifying the measures within three implementation phases (till 2007, till 2010, till 2015) corresponding to the aforementioned UNECE strategy.

The curricular reform introduced by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. also led to the renewal of curricula or regional schooling, including secondary VET schools (see the example below), envisaged by the aforementioned policy papers.

Furthermore, raising environmental awareness of the population is promoted by Centres of Environmental Education of Slovak Environmental Agency (SEA). SEA was established in

1993 by the Ministry of Environment to focus on the environmental protection and assertions of principles of sustainable development, in which environmental education is considered a crucial activity for strengthening environmental protection. Diverse projects are in progress under the support of Centre of Environmental Projects Programming and Environmental Education (CPEP). Five centres of environmental education spread nation-wide focus on practice offering environmental education preferably by means of experiential learning. In autumn 2009, the 12th Annual Environmental Education Programmes Fair (ŠIŠKA) took place in one of the centres of environmental education, attracting teachers and other facilitators interested in innovations and experience sharing. The fair was organised within the project “Improvement of Public Information and Environmental Awareness of Public in Protection of Biodiversity and Landscape”, implemented during September 2008 – September 2011 and funded from the Operational Programme Environment (cofinanced from the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund). This project also includes activities focused on development of educational and information materials, development of certified courses and organising regional methodological and information days for teachers. One of the interesting examples is development of educational programme focused on ecological footprint analysis. Based on William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel concept and the calculation method, students are trained to become sensitive to global environmental problems by measuring the ecological impact of individual students and their schools.

The British Council project Challenge Europe creating the international community of young “climate advocates”, bringing together ambitious young people from 15 European countries interested in fighting climate change, created a basis for networking schools, including secondary VET schools, under the leadership of Grammar School Lipany maintaining the “enviroportal” <http://skolapreklimu.stranka.info>. Within this portal diverse activities are promoted, including those offering class-ready materials for teachers (i.a. about the aforementioned ecological footprint) and supporting materials for any kind of learners.

Reflecting the Bonn Declaration adopted on 2nd April 2009 within the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and in support of the World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development proclaimed by the United Nations for the years 2005 to 2014, the German Society for Environmental Education (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Umwelterziehung) assisted in further development of internationally well known Eco-Schools Programme in Slovakia, financially backed by Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt. The project titled Green School (www.zelenaskola.sk) is implemented under the supervision of the Slovak member of the Foundation for Environmental Education and its partner, the Centre of Environmental and Ethical Education ŽIVICA. Supported also by other sponsors the programme attracted 115 regional schools including VET secondary schools. It is an officially recognised project of the World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in years 2010-2011.

To complement environmental programmes run independently, often by NGOs or supported by grant schemes or international institutions, such as the two aforementioned examples, the following example presents changes in the curricula in VET taking place within the curricular reform already mentioned above.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Inclusion of greening issues into the State Educational Programme (SEP) for ISCED 3A Technical and Applied Chemistry study branches group

The development of the State Educational Programme is linked with the curriculum decentralisation introduced by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale

Environmental issues are considered a transversal topic that needs to be addressed within all study and training branches. Therefore, it is an integral part of all secondary SEPs and present in both general and vocational components of VET.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets

The aim is to provide students of study branches covered by this SEP with knowledge, skills and competences related to greening economy effects.

(c) Target groups

- Students of secondary VET schools at ISCED 3A levels;
- Teachers of secondary VET schools.

(d) Status of implementation

The State Educational Programme has been valid since the 2008/2009 school year. It provides the framework for developing individual school educational programmes. Within this SEP the following competences are indicated as to be reflected within school educational programmes.

There is a competence formulated in terms of general approach: A graduate of respective school and programme has to apply human principles with regard to human relations and ecological principles with regard to environment.

Furthermore, there are diverse VET related competences set, among which the following are worth stressing. A graduate has to:

- define waste, waste management;
- make classification and categorisation of waste;
- describe environmental impact of respective technologies;
- explain the system and conditions for waste disposal, recycling and separation of waste;
- describe respective low- and non-waste technologies;
- have knowledge of the principles of ecological disposal of pollutants;
- have knowledge of the methodology for elaboration of safety data sheets;
- have knowledge of the environmental legislation;
- have knowledge of the legal framework concerning waste management.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

Greening issues are included in all state educational programmes. Thus, all study fields and all secondary VET ISCED levels are covered. Subsequently, they have to be translated into all school educational programmes to be elaborated autonomously by all schools. Of course, greening issues are addressed in respective programmes in different depth. Technical and Applied Chemistry study branches group is an example where greening issues are addressed in more detail.

Competences relevant for environmental education can also be widened within excursions lasting 12-14 hours, programmed for every school year. Ecological and green technologies are explicitly mentioned as a recommended focus of excursions. Furthermore, human and environmental protection courses of 6-7 hours are to be included in the curricula annually, offering an additional opportunity to address greening issues.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- State Institute of Vocational Education;
- VET schools.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The policy has been introduced since the 2008/2009 school year, so its impact on students has not yet been evaluated. Nevertheless, all schools must reflect greening issues, as it is required by respective SEP.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

Sensitivity of students to green policies and greening economy is considered an indicator of success. Nevertheless, no exact indicators/benchmarks have been set do far, as the curricular reform is in the early phase.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies

There is no research conducted to evaluate respective school activities, as there is too soon to mainstream the experience.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

There is the risk that activities planned within new autonomously elaborated curricula might be hampered by a lack of means, and subsequently reduced. It is necessary to monitor the impact of new curricula and the decentralisation of curriculum development per se.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

It is inevitable to support out-of-school activities with the relevant content. There are many

programmes run by NGOs and volunteers that could accompany respective school activities embedded in curricula.

5. Source, legend

Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.,

http://www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/245_2008.pdf

State Educational Programme (SEP) for ISCED 3A Technical and Applied Chemistry study branches group,

http://www.siov.sk/ext_dok-svp-isced-3a-28/11564c

1.5 Other challenges for VET

No doubt, major challenges in VET policy are interrelated with globalisation (and the related demographic decline) as a major driver of incoming changes. VET policies are strongly interlinked with labour market development and therefore in a hard position to reflect accelerating changes in the labour market in shorter and shorter time for reaction. Thus, IVET needs to be substantially changed and traditional ambition to prepare a full variety of tailor made workers for employers must be abandoned. Traditional school based IVET will not be able to provide for this task under new conditions, regardless of the new efforts of the Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. to make VET schools better responding to labour market needs. The problem of new policies is that decision makers still underestimate the position of VET schools in a new democratic society - that VET schools stand between two markets: the input market of education services reflecting students' and their parents' desires and the output market of school graduates more or less interlinked with the labour market.

Recently, VET schools, which were under the pressure of per capita funding and population decline, fully concentrated on satisfaction of input market clients, disregarding from the output market due to the VET policy systemic failure: non-existing benefits for schools for harmonising the schools output market and the labour market. The major challenges of IVET policy are therefore as follows:

- rethink and elaborate the quality assurance system to prevent from the graduate quality decline due to the one-sided pressure of per capita financing for mass production satisfying input clients desires; and making schools less interested in the output market and in fact fully irresponsible for their future in the labour market after graduation;
- to improve labour market understanding and support labour market research in order to anticipate labour demand and skills needs as the fundamental precondition for evidence based policy making. The recent period of ignoring labour market by IVET has finished with exhausting the resources available from the army of skilled unemployed workers shortly before breaking up of the financial crisis in 2008. Regardless of the current increase of unemployment, IVET will face the pressure to balance its services to satisfy clients in both input and output markets. A very serious problem of IVET policy is that this task is seen by the new legislation in a very simplified way. The new Act on VET seems to go from the one extreme – an insufficient responsiveness to the labour market, to the other extreme – to the underestimation of VET school expertise and strong subordination of VET schools to employers' desires (see the description of the role of respective VET councils and the new VET governance in the part on reform of governance and management in chapter 4.3). Unfortunately, decision makers mix up

employers' desires with labour market needs. Furthermore, they see no difference between the labour market needs aimed at the reproduction of current status and the labour market needs corresponding to the full usage of economy and human resource potential. With almost no labour market research and lacking know-how for surveying of employers no serious evidence based policy is possible due to the lack of valid and reliable data;

- it is inevitable to strengthen career guidance and counselling, making the difference between provision of these services in relation to input, output, and labour markets. An incoming period indicates the risk of subordination of individual development to short-term workers demand. Schools demanded by recent IVET policy to put stress on the input market are demanded by the new policy to put stress on the labour market, instead of putting stress on the permanent efforts to balance the input and output markets, as well as outputs and labour markets, based on the provision of quality data and quality guidance and counselling services.

Interlinking IVET and CVET must be newly rethought with CVET and labour market training being substantially more relevant for aligning training to employers' needs. It is hardly possible to provide for publicly funded and school based IVET aligned to respective employers' needs. It is counterproductive, and finally harming the labour market, to expect that the supply of tailored young workers can be secured without substantial cofunding from respective employers. It is very likely that Slovakia will have to reshape its IVET and introduce apprenticeship in a larger extent and to allow coexistence of school based and dual VET systems. A first precondition of any progress is to rethink financing VET. Therefore

- efficiency of labour market training must be examined, together with financial contributions to strategic investors to retrain newly recruited workers for which investors are never made accountable. In fact, such a contribution was an incentive to make country/region attractive for investment rather than a contribution to cover cost effective training needed to fill the gaps in skills and knowledge of recruited people. Without this, any trendy proposals visible in the current political discourse about flexicurity shall not be translated into practice, as flexibility in dismissal practice will not be complemented by tailored, targeted and efficient CVET/LMT;
- financing CVET and labour market must be interlinked with financing IVET, allowing IVET schools to benefit from CVET and labour market financial schemes provided they are able to reduce the extent of additional CVET and labour market training induced by employers' specific requirements or able to provide CVET/LMT efficiently.

Furthermore, supporting targeted research is inevitable, and therefore

- labour market research able to provide the valid and reliable data about skills needs, making the difference between technology based changes and changes in the demand of skills induced by changes in the distribution of work positions demand, must be established from the scratch;
- educational research aimed at identification of skills with a large intra-individual learning transfer potential must be revived, focusing not just on general education relevant skills, but also on vocational skills.

Since 2008, a fully new legislation has been introduced with many positive changes discussed later in other chapters. Nevertheless, two almost fatal weaknesses are still present

- policy making is still a result of the political preference of decision makers or lobbyism of important players rather than it is evidence based. As a consequence of lacking data, policy papers are descriptive, preferring rhetorically interesting format, but preferably general with insufficient identification of relevant actions, and almost avoiding measurable and controllable measures with targeted impact. It is significant that it is

usually impossible to identify failing measures, as the indication of the failure of respective measures in practice is not declared in advance. This, together with clearer personification of decision making, is inevitable for improving the efficiency of policy making. In current practice, usually no one fully agrees with respective policy and therefore no one can be made accountable in case of failure. Respective decision makers must be given a full, unshared responsibility for particular policies, and/or the possibility to retreat from respective policy making due to the professional disagreement without substantial endangering their working positions;

- policy making is still fragmented due to the fragmented governance and a lack of overarching expertise. Besides incoherence of sectoral policies (a future battle will relate to setting the overarching National Qualification System aligned to the EQF), the almost fatal incoherence is between policy setting and policy funding. Policies and measures must be set with already secured financial means (not just on the paper) and clearly declared unshared responsibilities for managing and monitoring the policies in practice.

In addition to the aforementioned proposals, there is an urgent need for specific measures to improve human resource management:

- prevent from the massive early school leaving of Roma, or compensate it by adjusting VET to their cultural specificity and dominant learning styles, stressing vocational skills over general education related knowledge and skills;
- strengthen in-service training of VET staff as an instrument to compensate at least partly the ageing of teachers and trainers and the low attractiveness of working positions at schools as the first choice career option;
- reduce IVET schools equipment modernisation debt, as one of instruments to make VET more attractive for all students, teachers and trainers, and in order to prevent at least partly from the brain drain of IVET tertiary students abroad.

2. Economic crisis - VET policies as recovery measures

Major consequences of the crisis

After the years of steep growth and expecting the further improvement after adoption of Euro in 2009, the Slovak economy, small and extremely open, heavily depending on the export into EU countries, slowed down dramatically. The crisis translated into deterioration of crucial macroeconomic data, as presented below.

Table 2.1: Selected macroeconomic data in 2004 -2009

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
GDP growth EU27	2.5	2	3.2	2.9	0.7	-4.2
GDP growth Slovakia	5	6.7	8.5	10.6	6.2	-4.7
Budget deficit EU27*	-2.9	-2.5	-1.4	-0.8	-2.3	-6.8
Budget deficit Slovakia*	-2.4	-2.5	-3.5	-1.9	-2.3	-6.8
Debt EU27**	62.2	62.8	61.4	58.8	61.6	73.6
Debt Slovakia**	41.5	34.2	30.5	29.3	27.7	35.7

Source: Eurostat

Notes: * general government deficit in % of GDP

** general government gross debt in % of GDP

A budget deficit over the Maastricht criteria and increasing indebtedness are considered a temporary feature by the government and seen as being substantially caused by the crisis only. In its Stability Programme the government promised the balanced budget by 2015, with consolidation below 3 % in 2013 and the reduced budget deficit to 5.5 % already in 2010. A positive growth of GDP is expected and forecasted for Slovakia already in 2010. With the revival of economy in Germany and the Czech Republic in 2010, the most important importers from Slovakia, improvement is also expected in the relevant exporting sectors. In contrast to the criticism of opposition parties, the government also believes in fiscal stimuli, i.a. PPP projects, to boost highway construction and support revival in the construction sector.

The sectoral difference in the impact of the crisis is visible from the data presenting the GDP change in recent years decomposed by the NACE sectors. As visible from the 2009/2008 index, the most important sector, industry, was severely hit (see 14 % decrease in category D below). While also the other important sector, trade (G), faced a decrease, and some other smaller sectors even a worse decrease (H, I), the construction sector (F) continued in 2009 in a temporary growth benefitting from earlier contracts. However, construction is expected to be the most hit sector in 2010. Construction production decreased by 12.9 %, while industry (C, D, E) increased by 19.2 % on the annual basis in March 2010, with the most significant revival in DK (43.2 %) and DL (34.0 %) subsectors.

Table 2.2: GDP by NACE categories in 2007-2009 (in million EUR*)

	2007	2008	2009	2009/2008
Economy total	60 869.05	65 344.82	64 088.44	0.981
A,B Agriculture, hunting, fishing, forestry total	1 909.98	1 900.29	2 087.51	1.099
C,D,E Industry total	17 435.21	18 353.28	16 648.38	0.907
C Mining and quarrying	356.83	286.80	354.20	1.235
D Manufacturing	14 144.26	15 135.96	13 026.13	0.861
DA Manufacture of food products;	1 229.24	1 382.56	1 631.56	1.180

beverages; tobacco				
DF,DG,DH Manufacture of chemical products	1 568.65	1 995.05	1 567.07	0.785
DJ Manufacture of basic metals; fabricated metal products	3 272.56	3 072.26	2 272.21	0.740
DK,DL,DM Manufacture of machinery, electrical; transport equipment	4 587.53	5 118.27	4 742.58	0.927
E Electricity, gas and water supply	2 934.11	2 930.53	3 268.05	1.115
F Construction	4 075.25	4 584.91	4 947.01	1.079
G Wholesale; retail trade; motor vehicles repair; motorcycles; personal, household goods	8 572.10	10 024.56	9 395.72	0.937
H Hotels and restaurants	744.47	839.24	620.25	0.739
I Transport, storage; communications	4 325.57	4 713.47	3 722.07	0.790
J Financial intermediation	1 808.21	2 086.93	2 015.47	0.966
K Real estate, renting; business activities	7 494.95	8 427.47	9 656.95	1.146
Other	8 625.90	8 383.49	9 143.24	1.091
Net taxes on products	5 877.41	6 031.17	5 851.85	0.970

Source: Statistical Office, ESA 95, quarterly national accounts

Note: * constant prices previous year

In parallel to the GDP decrease, employment decreased as well. The data from the table below presents the development in employment in 2004-2009, with the decrease visible in a full year of crisis after the four year period of growth.

Table 2.3: Employment data in Slovakia in 2004-2009 and in EU27 in 2009 (in thousands, growth and rates in %)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2009 EU
Employment total	2 141.4	2 207.1	2 295.2	2 350.5	2 423.4	2 356.6	213 883.0
Employment growth*	-0.9	3.1	4.0	2.4	3.1	-2.8	-1.8
Employment rate total	56.7	57.7	59.4	60.7	62.3	60.2	64.6
Employment rate (55 to 64 aged)	26.0	30.3	33.1	35.6	39.2	39.5	46.0
Employment rate (25 to 54 aged)	74.4	75.3	77.2	78.0	80.1	77.8	78.2
Employment rate (15 to 24 aged)	26.3	25.6	25.9	27.6	26.2	22.8	35.2
Employment growth**	-0.2	1.4	2.3	2.1	2.8	-2.4	-1.8

Source: Eurostat database; LFS series - Detailed annual survey results

Notes: * calculated from LFS series - Detailed annual survey results data (visible also in the first row)

** ESA data, Eurostat main tables [tsieb 050]

Employment rates of older workers and young people are very low, unfavourable also compared to EU27, and indicating the importance of targeted interventions. The improvement in the age group of older workers is dominantly caused by the increase of retirement age; the decrease in the employment of young people is also partly caused by the increasing enrolment in higher education. However, this can translate into higher unemployment data of tertiary graduates in the future. The impact of the crisis on employment in respective sectors of economy is visible from the table below.

Table 2.4: Employment by economic activity* in 2008 and 2009 (in thousands)

	2008	2009	2009/2008
Economy total	2 423.4	2 356.6	0.97
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	95.3	84.5	0.89
B Mining and quarrying	14.0	10.8	0.77

C	Manufacturing	638.5	564.8	0.88
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	29.9	30.7	1.03
E	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	35.0	33.1	0.95
F	Construction	257.1	256.1	1.00
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	291.5	312.1	1.07
H	Transportation and storage	158.4	151.2	0.95
I	Accommodation and food service activities	106.9	106.6	1.00
J	Information and communication	45.6	48.7	1.07
K	Financial and insurance activities	55.4	49.9	0.90
L	Real estate activities	12.8	12.4	0.97
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	75.0	80.9	1.08
N	Administrative and support service activities	59.9	58.3	0.97
O	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	166.4	177.6	1.07
P	Education	163.0	161.2	0.99
Q	Human health and social work activities	149.9	148.2	0.99
R	Arts, entertainment and recreation	24.2	28.1	1.16
S	Other service activities	38.2	35.0	0.92
T	Activities of households	5.7	5.1	0.89

Source: Eurostat database, LFS series - Detailed annual survey results

Note: * NACE rev.2 categories

A dramatic employment decrease visible from the table above resulted also from the vulnerability of the Slovak economy structure, as the most important industrial products (cars and car supplies, LCD panels) are typical slow-moving consumer goods very sensitive to the purchasing power decline and/or purchasing appetite of people in rich EU countries. Employment gradually declined in all sectors of economy, indicating cost saving interventions in all sectors, in those declining as well as in those still growing. March 2010 employment data of the Statistical Office reported the decline compared to March 2009 in all sectors of economy. At the same time, a gradual increase in employment is expected to follow the growth in some EU countries, including Slovakia, however, with some delay.

The unemployment data also confirm the vulnerability of two age groups, the unemployment rates of older workers and young people are over the EU27 data.

Table 2.5: Unemployment data in Slovakia in 2004-2009 and EU27 in 2009 (in thousands and rates in %)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2009 EU
Unemployment total (15 to 64 aged)	490.3	429.2	355.3	295.5	255.5	323.3	21 201.1
Unemployed males (15 to 64 aged)	254.1	225.0	180.7	145.2	124.3	170.3	11 658.3
Unemployed females (15 to 64 aged)	236.2	204.2	174.6	150.3	131.3	153.0	9 542.8
Unemployment rate (15 to 64 aged)	18.6	16.3	13.4	11.2	9.5	12.1	9.0
Unemployed (55 to 64 aged)	25.0	24.8	20.1	18.2	16.1	20.8	1 843.0
Unemployment rate (55 to 64 aged)	16.1	13.4	9.8	8.2	6.4	7.7	6.3

Unemployed (25 to 54 aged)	351.3	308.1	254.5	217.4	187.9	232.8	14 207.3
Unemployment rate (25 to 54 aged)	16.5	14.5	11.9	10.2	8.7	10.8	7.9
Unemployed (15 to 24 aged)	114.0	96.3	80.8	59.8	51.5	69.8	5 150.7
Unemployment rate (15 to 24 aged)	32.8	30.1	26.6	20.3	19.0	27.3	19.8

Source: LFS, Eurostat

A dramatic unemployment growth visible from the table above resulted also from the already mentioned vulnerability of the economy structure, as the most important export goods are slow-moving consumer goods. A detailed analysis indicates that blue collar workers were the most hit by dismissals, as visible from the data broken by the ISCO categories.

Table 2.6: Previous occupations of the unemployed* (in thousands)

	2008Q2	2008Q3	2008Q4	2009Q1	2009Q2	2009Q3	2009Q4
Total	268.3	241.5	233.2	277.3	302.4	339.2	374.9
ISCO 3	5.9	6.0	5.9	8.6	9.6	10.9	12.9
ISCO 4	4.5 (u)	3.3 (u)	3.9 (u)	6.7	8.2	8.2	7.5
ISCO 5	8.0	9.8	9.5	12.6	14.2	13.1	14.0
ISCO 7	7.0	9.1	10.2	19.9	27.5	27.9	28.1
ISCO 8	9.8	9.6	12.9	22.1	30.2	32.2	31.2
ISCO 9	10.8	10.0	9.9	16.6	21.1	22.7	27.5

Source: Eurostat LFS; u- unreliable;

Notes: * quarterly data and only the most relevant groups are reflected

ISCO1 - Legislators, senior officials and managers, ISCO2 – Professionals, ISCO3 - Technicians and associate professionals, ISCO4 - Clerks, ISCO5 - Service workers and shop and market sales workers, ISCO6 - Skilled agricultural and fishery workers, ISCO7 - Craft and related trades workers, ISCO8 - Plant and machine operators and assemblers, ISCO9 - Elementary occupations

Major consequences of the crisis on skills and VET policies

There is no immediate impact on VET policies directly interlinked with the crisis visible in IVET, as IVET is dominantly school based and publicly funded. This can be, however, changed in the near future.

There is a clear impact of crisis visible in enterprise training, however, without exact data. A decline is reported in provision of training as one of internal cost saving measures, in particular in the cases when this kind of training was considered a non-financial benefit for respective workers - usually middle level managers.

In contrast, the impact of crisis is clearly visible in the need for the assistance to the increased numbers of unemployed and employed, but at risk of dismissal, i.a. by training covered from public funds (see chapter 8.1).

The crisis caused the need for fiscal consolidation in the future. Therefore, there is a risk of fiscal constraints affecting VET schools and the return of tight policies that caused modernisation debt in equipment of schools, unless the government finally recognises that continuation of underfinancing IVET can cause irreparable damages for the future of the country and finds other targets for cost saving measures.

The crisis also indicated that blue collar workers, in particular from assembling plants, are highly at risk of dismissal and the country will have to rethink measures to diversify support of future direct foreign investment in order to attract investors with high value added production and/or investors with fast-moving consumer goods. As already mentioned, IVET faces structural changes, originally caused by the accelerated economic growth between 2004 and 2008, and subsequently doubled by the 2009 crisis that also accelerated a rush adoption of the Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. This fully new legislation, for the first time focusing particularly on IVET, induces VET policies that are highly at risk of being partly biased by the current crisis. Employers severely hit by the crisis and at the same time receiving substantially more power in influencing IVET show a tendency to prefer short-term measures over long-term measures. This can result in an insufficient exploitation of inhabitants' potential (in terms of qualifications and productivity) and efforts to funnel young labour force into the assembling industry, which is currently very important for the country, but can hardly represent a future of the country striving to become a knowledge-based society.

The vulnerability of workers in manufacturing visible from Table 2.4 above, documenting the changes in employment in the times of crisis - in 2009 in contrast to 2008, is complemented here by Table 2.7 below, indicating the changes in employment before the break of the crisis. This table also offers an overview about the development of the composition of the work force in booming economy years in Slovakia. The last column also indicates the future growth potential and the need for reshaping the composition of the work force to meet knowledge-based economy labour force needs.

Table 2.7: Employment by economic activity (NACE rev.1.1) in 2004-2008 (in thousands)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008/2004	2008/2007	2008 (%)
All	2 141.4	2 207.1	2 295.2	2 350.5	2 423.4	1.13	1.03	100
A	107.6	104.1	100.2	98.2	97.0	0.90	0.99	4.00
B	:	:	:	:	:			
C	13.9	14.7	16.0	16.4	14.2	1.02	0.87	0.59
D	576.6	590.6	608.3	633.7	646.2	1.12	1.02	26.67
E	43.1	42.5	41.7	40.2	42.0	0.97	1.04	1.73
F	205.8	209.7	226.3	237.0	256.3	1.25	1.08	10.58
G	255.9	268.8	290.2	299.5	298.0	1.16	0.99	12.30
H	82.1	89.6	101.5	101.6	107.0	1.30	1.05	4.42
I	138.6	147.0	155.9	165.3	177.6	1.28	1.07	7.33
J	45.3	47.7	51.7	47.4	55.1	1.22	1.16	2.27
K	118.1	127.0	130.3	144.0	155.8	1.32	1.08	6.43
L	154.2	155.0	161.2	159.1	166.5	1.08	1.05	6.87
M	158.4	161.9	165.6	162.5	162.9	1.03	1.00	6.72
N	150.1	148.7	153.6	153.6	152.8	1.02	0.99	6.31
O	78.2	87.5	84.6	81.8	85.6	1.09	1.05	3.53
P	6.9	7.4	5.8	8.2	5.7	0.83	0.70	0.24
Q	:	:	:	:	:			
No answer	5.1	4.2 (u)	:	:	:			
C to K	1 479.3	1 537.8	1 621.9	1 685.2	1 752.2	1.18	1.04	72.32
C to F	839.4	857.6	892.2	927.3	958.6	1.14	1.03	39.56
G to K	639.9	680.2	729.6	757.9	793.5	1.24	1.05	32.75
G to Q	1 188.0	1 240.9	1 300.5	1 323.9	1 367.5	1.15	1.03	56.44
M to Q	393.9	405.8	409.7	406.9	407.5	1.03	1.00	16.82

Source: Eurostat database, LFS series - Detailed annual survey results

Notes: A - Agriculture, hunting and forestry; B - Fishing; C to K - Industry and services (excluding public administration); C to F - Industry; C - Mining and quarrying; D - Manufacturing; E - Electricity, gas and water;

supply; F - Construction; G to K - Services (excluding public administration); G to Q - Services; G - Wholesale and retail trade - repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods; H - Hotels and restaurants; I - Transport, storage and communication; J - Financial intermediation; K - Real estate, renting and business activities; L - Public administration and defence - compulsory social security; M to Q - Other services; M - Education; N - Health and social work; O - Other community, social, personal service activities; P - Activities of households; Q - Extra-territorial organisations and bodies;
(u) – unreliable, : - not available

2.1 Initiatives for recovery

Similarly to other countries a multi-partisan anti-crisis group, composed of experts and representatives of financing sector, trade unions, employer associations and the Association of Municipalities and Villages of Slovakia, was created to rethink anti-crisis measures and to advise the government.

The Slovak government adopted the first set of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis in November 2008, with the update of measures in December following the EU Council European Recovery Plan. There were in total 38 measures (compared to 27 measures originally suggested in November) structured around 7 areas: Macroeconomic policy (2 measures), budgetary policy (2), financial market policy (3), labour market policy (6), business environment (23), wage and pricing policy (not specified in numbered measures), tax and contribution policy (2).

With regard to the labour market policy, the proposed measures were as follows: making active labour market policies and employment services modernisation more efficient (in particular national projects focused on employment of long-term unemployed, older workers, development of national flexicurity system, development of national system of occupations, forecasting of labour market needs, assessment of active labour market measures efficiency); drawing funds from the Globalization Adjustment Fund to support employees affected by mass dismissals; launching the national project to support employment of citizens at risk of mass dismissals due to the global financial crisis; launching a call for demand driven projects to support creation of new jobs including jobs in new companies; provision of labour market training to support employment and raising the quality of the labour force to meet employers' needs; analysing and reporting to the government about fulfilment of foreign and domestic investors' commitments on numbers of newly created jobs and granted investment stimuli (state aid).

In February 2009, the amendment of the Employment Act No. 5/2004 Coll. was adopted, introducing new active labour market policy measures to fight the crisis, with temporal validity since 1st March 2009 till 31st December 2010. The new active labour market policy tools introduced by this amendment included contributions

- to support maintaining employment (§ 50d);
- to support creation of new jobs (§ 50e);
- to employee's wage (§ 50f);
- to support self-employment (§ 50g);
- to support self-employment in production of and trade in agricultural products (§ 50h).
-

The tools corresponding to § 50d and § 50e are considered the best anti-crisis activities by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as a result of data indicating maintaining 41 472

working places a creating 8 457 working places for job seekers. An additional new contribution instrument with the validity till December 2011

- to support regional and local employment (§ 50i);

was introduced by the same amendment. It is considered very promising due to the interest of many players in this tool immediately after its introduction.

Furthermore, higher contribution is provided for shorter-distance commuting to work, more favourable conditions were created for setting social enterprises, and provision of aided investment by means of contribution to creation of new jobs is not conditioned by featuring the average unemployment rate.

This second package of measures aimed at labour policies was followed by the third package of measures also approved in February 2009. They were aimed at the macro-economic area and the business environment improvement mentioned in more detail later.

In June 2009, specific measures were adopted to assist inhabitants living in rural areas, in particular people with lower levels of attained education with the possibility to get employment in the agricultural sector or for self-employment for those who own land. As these inhabitants were not specifically addressed by previous anti-crisis measures, the paper presented measures particularly focused on this group. The aim was to stimulate creation of 5 000 jobs in the agricultural sector. The creation of new jobs had to be supported by EUR 33.2 million, of which EUR 16.6 million from the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and the rest EUR 16.6 million from the state budget.

The progress in anti-crisis measures was periodically monitored by the government, with the last progress monitoring report before finishing this report discussed by the government on 10th March 2010. Within the “Report on Implementation of Measures Taken by the Slovak Government to Overcome the Impact of Economic and Financial Crisis for 2009” three aforementioned anti-crisis packages were assessed. According to the assessment, employers were interested in particular in the financial contribution for maintaining employment (§ 50d of the Employment Act No. 5/2004 Coll.; in total 46.8 thousand jobs were supported by EUR 14.8 million (with one job supported by EUR 317 in average), in the contribution to support creation of new jobs (§ 50e of the Act); in total 6.5 thousand new jobs were supported by EUR 20.6 million (with EUR 3 175 per one job in average).

In total 53 478 jobs were supported by EUR 35.6 million within the anti-crisis measures. When all active labour policy measures including anti-crises ones are considered, labour offices supported in total 224 382 jobs for unemployed of employed job seekers by EUR 134.74 million (with EUR 600 per one job in average) in 2009, according to this report.

The anti-crisis packages were, however, also subjected to criticism, considering the first package from November 2009 being too much general, although better specified in December, with a substantial impact on labour market just later, after the adoption of the second package amending the law and allowing for the gradual translation of measures into practice. Both February packages were also supported by the opposition parties, however, criticised as coming with a delay and as too costly. In contrast to the government, employers and right wing parties considered the reduction of income and payroll taxes, and more flexible Labour Code the best way to fight the crisis.

This is to resume the introduced measures considered important by at least one of key players:

- introduction of the so-called “flexikonto” (flexible account) instrument within the Labour Code (§ 252c), allowing the employer to use the flexible working time and provide employees with paid time off if there is no work, in exchange of overtime working without allowance later;
- provisional reduction of contributions paid by self-employed by the reduction of the rate for contributions paid to the Reserve Fund of Solidarity from original 4.75 % to 2 % since 1st April 2009 to 31st December 2010. Since 1st April 2009 to 31st December 2009 self-employed savings reached EUR 17.5 million with 244 399 self-employed;
- payment of contributions over the period of 60 days for employees who were not dismissed due the loss of sales, provided the employer provides 60 % of wage to employees despite they are provisionally not working;
- provision of a state guarantee for 55 % of a loan for enterprises with up to 100 employees in case of loans amounting to a maximum of EUR 1 million;
- simplification of the tax system, i.a. concerning calculation of VAT and shortening excess VAT repayment period from 60 to 30 days to benefit entrepreneurs cash flow, and increase of tax-deductible minimum from the current level of 19.2 times the subsistence level to 22.5 times (reducing state-budget revenues by almost EUR 150 million);
- creation of more favourable conditions for giving entitlement to unemployment benefits by inclusion of the parental leave, and by shortening the required three year period of paying unemployment insurance contributions over the last four years to a two year period of paying unemployment insurance contributions over the last three years (the first measure affecting 11 400 beneficiaries in 2010, and the second measure increasing the number of eligible recipients by about 35 000 compared to original estimations).

There were two VET related policies expected to contribute indirectly to recovery based on the already applied active labour market policy tools, implementing labour market training (§ 46) and graduate practice (§ 51); see also chapter 5.1 and the part on funding labour market training for unemployed people in chapter 8.1:

- There is a large increase in the number of unemployed retrained (12 143 in 2008 and 17 924 in 2009), and even a larger increase is visible in the number of retrained employed to prevent them from dismissals and to increase their employability (13 863 in 2008 and 29 921 in 2009). Respective budgets were substantially increased, as documented in Table 8.5 in chapter 8.1;
- Graduate practice was considered a very successful instrument by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as it allowed graduates to get the first contact with practice and acquire skills needed for the work, which helps them in seeking job after finishing the graduate practice. According to the Centre’s reporting, there was a large increase in service: 7 451 unemployed job seekers were placed into the graduate practice in 2008 compared to 11 764 unemployed job seekers placed in 2009. Out of total 19 215 people placed in 2008-2009, 8 533 people were placed into the labour market, which is 44.41 % success rate.

There were also two measures directly related to VET, newly suggested to prevent from increasing unemployment and to contribute to future recovery, however, with controversial results:

For the already mentioned national project to support employment of citizens at risk of mass dismissals due to the global financial crisis (in the programming period called the National Project “100“, later labelled as National Project I/2009), the total budget of EUR 3 319 391.89 was originally allocated, of which EUR 2 256 522.61 for Activity 1 aimed at guidance and

counselling and EUR 920 135.34 for Activity 2 aimed at retraining. The project was envisaged for all regions except the Bratislava Region with the start in 2009 and the end in January 2011. Nevertheless, this project was unsuccessful due to the insufficient interest of employers, and it was abandoned in March 2010.

The government asked higher education institutions to accept in the 2009/2010 academic year additional 5 000 students including PhD students above the already announced numbers of new entrants to compensate low job creation and to mitigate the impact on secondary school graduates. Higher education institutions were promised to receive additional funding for three years to prevent secondary school graduates from unemployment, as they are highly at risk under current conditions. Finally, 7 254 new students were additionally enrolled, of which 3 509 in strongly VET related higher education (1 197 in Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, 911 in Technical University in Košice, 221 in Technical University in Zvolen, 513 out of 539 in University of Žilina, 294 out of 438 in University of Trenčín, 373 in University of Agriculture in Nitra), with over 50 % of all additionally enrolled in more or less VET related studies (including e.g. medicine, economy, etc.). Some critical voices are unsatisfied saying this measure can decrease the quality of education, others praise it as a way to bridge the troubled times and at the same time increase the employability of these young people.

In addition to governmental activities there were also bottom up initiatives supported by public money, usually within the ESF demand driven scheme. One of the projects aimed at upgrading and acquiring new skills to overcome the crisis, considered very successful by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, is described below.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Education – investment in human capital

The ESF demand driven project within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion (17th March 2009 – 30th June 2010)

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale

To improve the generic skills (in particular ICT, foreign language, communication) that can be used in many working positions and therefore increase the employability of trainees.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets

Retrain employees from target groups based on their individual needs embedded in the newly elaborated Strategy for Human Resource Management and based on a newly developed training plan.

(c) Target groups

- Employees over 50 years of age;
- Women;
- Low skilled employees in the following fields: ICT, foreign language, communication.

(d) Status of implementation

The project is carried out within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, Priority Axis 1 “Supporting Employment Growth”, Measure 1.2 “Promoting the Creation and Sustainability of Jobs through Increasing the Adaptability of Workers, Businesses and the Promotion of Entrepreneurship”. The project is already in progress with the total budget of EUR 357 057.03, of which EUR 339 204.18 is from public sources and EUR 17 852.85 from own sources of the civic association conducting the project.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation

The measure is implemented in a micro region in southern-central Slovakia.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

It is part of a larger policy, as visible from funding from ESF, however, it is based on an original know-how and practice of the civic association Education Has a Future with a seat in Bratislava.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

Civic association Education Has a Future
Local schools
City of Hurbanovo

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The policy has been only preliminary monitored and will be subjected to evaluation after finishing of the project. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family considers this project promising and recommended it as a good practice example with a mainstreaming potential.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

Trainees' needs identified
Skills improved

The group of total 105 trainees is composed of 69 women and 36 men. Of the total number of trainees 20 are elderly aged between 55 and 64 years.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies

See part (a).

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

No substantial obstacles have been reported yet.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The project is entering the final phase of implementation and has not yet been subject of final evaluation.

5. Source, legend

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family,
<http://www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1>

3. Impact and implications of the joint work on European principles and tools

3.1 Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments

Europass

Slovakia was among very active countries to promote Europass. The Slovak National Observatory of VET in cooperation with Cedefop prepared the Slovak version of Europass documents and guidelines in 2005, and the national Europass website has been available for interested people since 2006, maintained by the National Europass Centre (NEC).

Following Decision No. 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 15th December 2004 on a Single Transparency Framework for Qualifications and Competences (Europass), the Ministry of Education has decided to create the National Europass Centre within the already existing Centre for the Recognition of Diplomas at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (ENIC/NARIC) since 1st July 2005. NEC has been concentrating on promotion of Europass documents and dissemination of related information in support of academic, VET and professional mobility, however, without collecting data about impact. The only data collected is about mobility, data about issuing certificate and diploma supplements could only be gained from schools on request. It is impossible to check how many individuals made use of CV and Language Passport. Nevertheless, availability of documents in the Slovak language boosted the interest of Slovak entities in making use of Europass. In addition, contacts with international partners lead to increasing the use of Europass as an instrument facilitating common understanding in practice.

- Europass CV is the most popular among the Europass documents, gradually developing into a standard format;
- Language Passport is also well-known as a consequence of popularity of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages;
- Issuing Diploma Supplements is fully settled, as it was transposed into Slovak legislation by Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education, as amended. All higher education institutions are able to issue this document on request in Slovak and/or a foreign language;
- Issuing Certificate Supplements has not been backed by legislation until September 2008, with coming into force of the new Education Act. All schools are requested to issue, in addition to the certificate, a supplement containing details about completed educational programme, according to § 18(9) of the aforementioned act. Although not stated and not explicitly required by law, the Europass format of certificate supplement is increasingly used;
- Europass Mobility is the only document with detailed statistics available. It indicates a steep increase in interest. There were only 222 Europass Mobility documents issued in 2006, however 653 in 2007 with top 1 020 in 2008. The following table offers distribution of documents according to organisational framework in 2008 and 2009, indicating also the further increase in issuing these documents within the Leonardo da Vinci programme and the decrease within other programmes and actions.

Table 3.1: Number of Europass Mobility documents issued by programmes and actions in 2008 and 2009

Programmes and actions	2008	2009
Leonardo da Vinci	747	799
Erasmus	198	154
Comenius	14	10
Grundtvig	1	0
Youth	21	0
Other EC funded actions	139	11
Within non-EC funded actions	-	33
Total	1 020	1 007

Source: National Europass Centre

The following table offers distribution of issued Europass Mobility documents by countries, which also indicates priorities of destinations.

Table 3.2: Number of Europass Mobility documents issued by destination country in 2009

AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI
55	6	0	0	334	198	2	0	22	46	27
FR	HU	IE	IS	IT	LI	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL
54	29	4	0	15	0	0	0	0	3	3
NO	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	TR	UK	Total	
34	54	6	0	22	7	0	25	61	1 007	

Source: National Europass Centre

As visible from the following tables, the most frequent were shorter mobilities, the largest participating age group were people aged 15-20, and girls were slightly more active than boys within activities accompanied by issuing Europass Mobility documents.

Table 3.3: Number of issued Europass Mobility documents by duration of mobility period in 2009

Mobility duration	Up to 4 weeks	5 to 12 weeks	4 to 6 months	7 to 9 months	12 months	> 12 months	Total
Number	667	283	43	14	0	0	1 007

Source: National Europass Centre

Table 3.4: Number of issued Europass - Mobility documents by age group in 2009

Age group	15-20	21-25	26-35	36-45	46 +	Total
Number	764	160	43	14	26	1 007

Source: National Europass Centre

Table 3.5: Number of issued Europass Mobility documents by gender of holders in 2009

Gender	Number	%
Female	536	53.2
Male	471	46.8

Source: National Europass Centre

The Slovak NEC website has been newly designed and substantially improved in contrast to 2008 monitoring. However, its assistance function should be improved, as no specific guiding documents to assist various schools with many different programmes have been elaborated

and no supportive documents for a variety of VET programmes have been prepared to facilitate issuing Europass Certificate Supplements. So far, it is left fully at schools' responsibility whether and how they issue these certificate supplements. Assistance to VET schools could be improved in cooperation with the State Institute of Vocational Education to cover a full variety of IVET programmes and to offer more detailed assistance to schools. The respective website could be updated reflecting respective state educational programmes elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education according to the new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

European Qualification Framework (EQF)

The revision of the National Qualification System, establishment of the National Qualification Framework and its alignment to the EQF is of the highest priority among Copenhagen tools, according to the Ministry of Education, as visible from adoption of relevant governmental resolution. A proposal to implement EQF in the Slovak Republic was approved by the Government Resolution No. 105/2009 of 4th February 2009. According to this proposal a National System of Qualifications (NSQ) was defined as a publicly accessible registry of all full and partial qualifications validated and recognised in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The NSQ will be aligned to the National System of Occupations (NSO), already in preparation under the surveillance of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, based on stipulation of Act No. 139/2008 Coll. amending Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. For the first time it was officially declared that NSQ will materialise into a publicly accessible registry, which should mean that an electronic portal encompassing all relevant information from diverse legislative norms and education/training opportunities to achieve qualification should be developed. Furthermore, this registry should be aligned to NQF compatible with EQF. This decision has been confirmed by Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, approved on 1st December 2009, stipulating the legislative background for elaboration of NSQ.

A Memorandum on Cooperation signed between the education and labour ministries should facilitate coordination in NSO and NSQ elaboration. Implementation of EQF should be supervised by a high level working group composed of representatives of ministries and other stakeholders, including employers' and employees' representatives.

Two ESF national projects to co-finance these policies are agreed to be launched. The ESF Operational Programme Education project "National System of Qualifications" should develop descriptions of qualifications composed of competence based qualification standards and respective assessment standards. NSQ will be compatible with EQF, although the NQF should consist of nine levels according to the project proposal annexed to the aforementioned document submitted to the government. The ESF Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion project "National System of Occupations" should develop descriptions of occupations adjusted to labour market needs and labour market intelligence data know-how to facilitate the updating NSO and facilitate the adjustment of VET to employers' requirements. A revision of national statistical classification is envisaged, resulting in alignment of NSO with ISCO 08.

It was originally declared, as a result of the 2005 consultation process, that elaboration of NQF would require 3 to 4 years of work. This estimation was however based on a possible agreement between all relevant governmental bodies necessary for the development of the overarching system covering partial qualifications and (full) qualifications within all sectors.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning EQF is reflected by the Government Resolution No. 105/2009. The responsibility of the minister of education is to ensure that all documents of achieved education will include reference to respective EQF level by the end of 2012. Furthermore, all new certificates, diploma and Europass documents should be issued with clear indication of the respective EQF level by the end of 2012, however without clear indication of responsibility to assure this. This seems to indicate that implementation of NQF will affect in the first wave only the education sector and only gradually other sectors. The composition of the national EQF high level working group indicates that this group should serve as a vehicle for the further implementation of EQF into other sectors after the successful development of NSO, NSQ and the implementation of EQF in the education sector. A national coordination point is the Lifelong Learning Division of the Ministry of Education.

EQF (and the first draft NQF) based analysis of graduate profiles of existing IVET programmes is the first precondition of further progress. Descriptions of IVET graduate profiles should comply with NQF descriptors by the end of 2011, and subsequently, also educational activities of CVET and adult education should be linked to respective levels of NQF by the end of 2011. Final versions of descriptors of respective NQF levels had to be agreed in 2009. Until now, however, it has only been agreed that levels 6-8 will correspond to three tertiary education cycles and reflect the Dublin descriptors, but there has been no agreement yet about other levels and even on a total number of levels. Nine levels are seen as better corresponding to existing qualification systems and education levels set by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. An inter-sectoral steering group chaired by the Director General of the Section of Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education has been established to prepare a draft proposal of NQF. A final version of NQF should be prepared in 2011 and the national referencing report by March 2013, according to the Ministry of Education.

European credit system for VET (ECVET)

There are controversial points of view among Slovak experts concerning ECVET. Although Slovakia responded positively to this initiative within the consultation process, there are doubts about the possibility to implement this tool in a short time and even about the usefulness of introduction of credits on a wide scope. It can hardly be expected, that the country is ready to adopt ECVET till 2012, as originally promoted by the EU, as there has been no comprehensive policy to implement ECVET elaborated so far. There is no reference to ECVET in Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning adopted by the parliament on 1st December 2009. While the draft act on LLL addressed the credit system in VET as one of the options for accumulation of prerequisites for obtaining a certificate on qualification, and concrete measures were intended to allow for obtaining qualification or partial qualification by means of accumulating credits from training and through recognition of prior learning, this intention did not translate into the law. There are several reasons why the country is not prepared for ECVET:

It is understood that completion of the learning process should be defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. This has not been, however, the case so far. Philosophy has been accepted, but translation into practice fails. Learning outcome related discourse is still insufficient and declarations of importance to identify respective learning outcomes are not supplemented by full understanding of what is meant with, and in particular, how to assess respective achievement. Typically, policy papers and curricular documents speak about assessment standards corresponding to respective declared outcomes, however there have been no valid and reliable instruments developed to translate assessment standards from plain rhetoric to a tool ready to be used in practice.

Moreover, with regard to the outcome level stressing philosophy, respective units should be identified to correspond to respective partial qualifications. These units must be expressed on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences. Instead of this, however, only traditional sequencing of education/learning process is focused in practice. Modularisation of VET is a positive step, however, the focus just on process, without the identification of relevant knowledge, skills and competence cannot be considered a substantial breakdown in the implementation of the reform. All this creates a serious brake for further progress in introduction of ECVET, as fundamental preconditions for the creation of credit system have not been fully met yet.

Furthermore, there is a more substantial problem with ECVET. More or less successful implementation of the credit system in higher education cannot be seen as a reason for the introduction of credit system in secondary VET due to substantial difference in learning conditions in higher and secondary education. While it could be known what kind of learning outcomes have to be addressed within secondary VET, it is not so clear how to progress in tertiary education. Therefore, the freedom related to gathering credits for tertiary student to identify his/her individual path in learning is of different substance than future credit gathering in a much stronger regulated secondary VET. Moreover, the translation of education process and content of education/learning to learning outcomes based representation per se would be an important progress and in fact a sufficient result. The competence based or learning outcomes based translation serves as a reliable instrument for promotion of mobility. The next step to translate it into credits is not inevitable, and very likely, it might even prove counterproductive, in particular with regard to preparation for specific, strongly regulated professions.

As also visible from the country's response to the Commission within the consultation process, there is a fear concerning maintaining quality of education and training, as a main difficulty is seen in setting "methods and responsibilities". Furthermore, at present "defining the method of the assignment of credit points and setting the reference figure" is considered "precipitous". A relative immaturity of VET to introduce ECVET is also visible from the expressed "problem to define the cumulation of units". Indeed, the experiment from the 1990s aimed at the reshaping IVET into competence based modules, which led to very promising results, gradually stopped due to the lack of local support after the international project was finished.

It is important to stress again that there are opinions considering the transfer and accumulation of competences and learning outcomes a flexible enough and more credible instrument compared to ECVET. Nevertheless, the country is open to study international experience and Slovak institutions are encouraged to cooperate in ECVET related activities within international projects; e.g. 2005-2007 Leonardo da Vinci project Management Capacity Building in the Formation of the Craft System (short version Formation Credit Points, No. PP 146 294/2005) with the participation of Slovak Craft Industry Federation, aimed at exploring introduction of credit system in the construction sector.

In contrast to secondary IVET, where introduction of credit systems might face problems, there is much more positive situation in continuing professional development. In addition to the health sector, where credit systems are widely used, a credit system is to be introduced into in-service training of pedagogical staff, according to Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff, adopted on 24th June 2009. Nevertheless, the philosophy of these systems does not fully comply with the learning outcome based approach promoted within the European discourse.

Lifelong guidance

It is well understood by policy makers that guidance can provide significant support to individuals during their transition between the levels and sectors of education and training systems and from school to adult and working life. The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, stressed that it was necessary to establish an operating functional system of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance in order to resolve and respond to the needs of the citizens and the society. It was further stated that “the current subsystems of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance in Slovakia are not mutually open and interconnected and they do not enable the people to flexibly access and achieve the required education and qualification according to the development of needs of employers during the entire span of their active life”. Furthermore, this document declared support for covering “the existing subsystems of education, to open them mutually and interconnect into functioning relations, supported by lifelong guidance in such a way that they would respond to the real needs of citizens” and declared reference to many European documents. The Council Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the Field of Guidance throughout Life from May 2004 was among those explicitly mentioned. Some specific goals for “building of the system of lifelong guidance with the aim to make it accessible to everybody” were stated within chapter 4.2.2 of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance as follows:

- “To build and then support the capacities for creation and sustaining of database information required for the services of lifelong guidance; to create these databases in co-operation and co-ordination of the key ministries (education and labour, respectively services for employment, health), to provide for the information being complementary, up-to-date, true, transparent and complete already during their development.
- To increase investment to the entire system of lifelong guidance provided both in the framework of the ministry of education as well as services for employment, to create conditions also for the operation of non-governmental providers of the services of lifelong guidance. To direct the investment into all areas – equipping with technical and device equipment including ICT, special tools and techniques, including the development of diagnostic and guidance instruments, information, primary specialised education of counsellors, monitoring and tools for quality improvement, etc.
- To provide for elaboration of quality standards for providers of the services of lifelong guidance, to apply the quality standards also to creation, processing and subsequent distribution of information.
- To increase the expertise of the services of lifelong guidance through increased quality of the specialised training of the counsellors.
- To build the system of lifelong guidance upon the principle of the dialogue among the stakeholders (state administration, local self-governments, employers), ... and also through utilisation of the principle of a learning region.”

On the basis of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance an Action Plan was approved by the Ministry of Education in November 2007. In accordance with this, further steps have been and are currently taken.

In October 2008, the National Forum on Lifelong Guidance was established as a consulting body of the minister of education. The National Forum consists of 26 members representing a wide range of institutions, both from governmental as well as non-governmental sectors (ministries of education, labour, health, justice, interior; public employment services; Association of Municipalities and Villages of Slovakia; Confederation of Trade Unions; Association of Educational Counsellors; Association of School Counsellors; Research

Institution of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology; information and counselling centres of higher education institutions; Association of Youth Information Centres; Youth Council of Slovakia).

The first document initiated by the National Forum was the Concept of Lifelong Guidance in the Slovak Republic, elaborated in March 2009. This policy paper defines aims, priorities and specific goals of lifelong guidance on national level, also in relation to specific target groups. The Council Resolution on Better Integration of Lifelong Learning Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies, adopted in November 2008, was explicitly reflected by this policy paper.

There were several measures suggested including:

- analysis of the current situation in lifelong guidance provision in the Slovak Republic and the system of lifelong guidance in selected EU countries (direct comparison);
- development of a new model of guidance and counselling services operating on the basis of approved competencies and effective cooperation of sectors/ministries, social partners and other providers;
- with the aim to increase the quality of guidance staff, the development of professional and qualification standards for guidance and counselling practitioners;
- development of a model of initial and further training of guidance and counselling practitioners;
- development of educational and training programmes for further, lifelong learning of practitioners;
- development of a quality assurance system;
- development of a career information system for lifelong guidance accessible to the public;
- improvement of access to lifelong guidance services on regional/local levels through establishing new guidance and counselling institutions and facilities.

The substantial support from the European Social Fund is envisaged to translate policies into practice. The Operational Programme Education (Priority Axis 1 “Reform of Education and Vocational Training System”; Measure 1.1 “Transformation of Traditional School into a Modern One”; Activity 1.1.2 “Supporting Educational and Career Guidance in Primary and Secondary Schools”), starting in the second half of 2009, should improve the quality of service offered in regional schooling. The detail information about the contribution of ESF projects during the 2004-2006(2009) Operational Programme Human Resources and about plans within the 2007-2013 Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion is offered in chapter 5.2.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validating skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning has been for a long time a subject of academic discussions initiated by the consultation process to the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning. There were, however, no measures implemented to introduce relevant policies, and the only experience which could facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning was related to projects of international cooperation, of which the Leonardo da Vinci project EPANIL (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning CZ/04/B/F/PP-168010, www.epanil.net) and the ESF project ATENA (Centre for the Development of Non-formal Learning and Personal Development, SOP HR 2004/1-189) are worth mentioning. Till 2005 no decision-making body got involved in elaboration of respective policy. The first impulse to gradual development of legislation came from the national ESF project Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the

Labour Market, managed by Academia Istropolitana, an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education, which was appointed a task to elaborate the background documents to the policy paper aimed at the further development of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance measures till 2015. The project was carried out within the Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 “Increasing Qualification and Adaptability of Employees and Persons Entering the Labour Market”, Measure 3.2 “Increasing the Scope, Improvement and Broader Provision of Further Education with a View to Improving the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees”. Subsequently, the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government in 2007. Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is one of strategic priorities stated within this paper. Subsequently, the Act on Lifelong Learning should have interlinked all segments of education and all settings of learning, and it should have introduced a system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In contrast to the draft version of the act, only the recognition of competences acquired within “further education” has been addressed within the final wording adopted by the parliament. There is, however, at least one important step made. In addition to (full) qualifications, also partial qualifications are to be recognised in the future.

Nevertheless, two important preconditions for successful implementation have not been met so far. The recognition and validation know-how is not yet available, and the institutionalisation of respective procedure has not yet been clarified. The criticism from formal educational institutions is not effectively encountered and their support for the reform has therefore not been secured yet. The reluctance of formal educational institutions and in fact also of decision makers is visible from the absence of terms equivalent to “validation/recognition of non-formal and informal learning” in this act. Instead of this, the way was open at least to the option to acquire it based on the examination procedure aimed at the assessment of competences corresponding to the standards set for respective (partial) qualifications. There is, however, a regulation in the act that might prove restrictive in the future, as this act stipulates what must be documented as a precondition of the eligibility for examination. Within § 17 of this act a certificate from the CVET programme accredited by the Ministry of Education designed for obtaining respective (partial) qualification or the confirmation about 5-year practice from employer is required in addition to the certificate of the attained level of education. This indicates a very cautious approach of the Ministry of Education (see also the subchapter on validation of prior learning in chapter 4.4 Promoting workplace learning). It is not just about avoiding the commonly used “Copenhagen” terminology. In the Slovak qualification systems, the requirement to achieve a relatively high level of education (in fact at least ISCED 3C) is expected as a rule. Thus, low educated people (ISCED 2 and less), with skills acquired from practice, will remain hampered to achieve a qualification certificate, regardless of the quality of their professional performance at work, as a consequence of not meeting the required level of formal education.

Strengths and weaknesses of implementation of European tools and principles

Copenhagen declaration was signed and supported by Slovak authorities. In 2002-2006 period, however, the Ministry of Education concentrated on reforming financing education at all levels, and the decentralisation reform interrelated with the reform of financing. Furthermore, reforming universities was of higher priority than reforming primary and secondary education, including VET. An insufficient progress in implementation of Copenhagen tools must be explicitly stressed. Translation of supportive rhetoric into practice has failed.

After 2006, working on reforms accelerated and in 2008 the new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. introduced curricular decentralisation. A competence based approach in programming primary and secondary education, including IVET, is in line with a new European paradigm, stressing a shift from the content to learning outcomes. This shift, clearly visible in the discourse and background documents for policies since the early 2000s, was, however, insufficiently interrelated with the important relevant Copenhagen tools, in particular CQAF (for details about this and EQARF see chapter 6.1 Improving the quality of VET) and validation of non-formal and informal learning. A new impulse came with the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, approved by the government on 25th April 2007, reflecting the European initiatives to strengthen career guidance and counselling in lifelong learning perspective and to see VET as a component of overarching efforts to create learning environment for all regardless the age, preferred learning setting and individual learning needs. The importance of the renewal of the national system of qualifications to cover all sectors and corresponding to EQF has been highlighted and confirmed by the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, however, without substantial breakdown in elaboration of NQF and progress in work on the alignment of NSQ and NQF to EQF till 2010. The current status in implementation of European tools and principles, together with positive and negative features, is in detail explained in the subchapters above. It can be concluded here that the first step taken by the Act on Lifelong Learning (with partial positive influence on the renewal of NSQ and on validation of prior learning) must be followed by the policy (and legislation) fully covering all sectors and learning settings, as the current Act on Lifelong Learning has been substantially limited in contrast to the originally envisaged coverage. Furthermore, concentrated efforts in support of deeper reflection of competence based and learning outcome based programming, and subsequently, elaboration of relevant know-how is a necessary prerequisite of further progress in implementation of Copenhagen tools. Elaboration of “qualification standards” and “assessment standards”, required by policies and legislation, is in gradual progress, however, it will take a long time to make it fully work, due to the insufficient agreement on backing philosophy to create them. There is the risk, apparently not typical just for Slovakia, that respective tools will only be implemented in a superficial way. E.g., there is a risk that under the pressure of time and legislation qualification and assessment standards will be set without a deep discussion. Nevertheless, the quality discussion and research on standards is in fact much more important for improving the provision of VET than setting standards per se.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Validation of non-formal and informal learning</p> <p>The measure was prioritised within the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, and partly incorporated into Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale</p> <p>Slovakia faced a lack of qualified labour force in a period of economic boom after accession into EU, and a low participation of adult population in continuing education in a long term. The current system of lifelong learning is characterised by insufficient links between formal and non-formal systems and by very limited possibilities for validation of non-formal learning outcomes.</p>

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets

The policy was aimed at implementing a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes enabling individuals to acquire partial qualification or (full) qualification equal to qualification attained within the formal system. The following is expression of Strategy in chapter 6.3:

“Recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal education and informal learning is one of the key components (subsystems) of the lifelong system. It strengthens the position of LLL as one of the main tools of flexibility of the society and development of knowledge society. There are two possible ways of recognition:

1. Credit system for the programmes of non-formal education;
2. Recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal education and informal learning to persons from the practice through the national authority with limited competencies.”

(c) Target groups

Citizens interested in (or in need of) acquisition of new qualifications allowing them to better assert at the labour market. A special attention should be paid to disabled citizens.

(d) Status of implementation

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007. The strategy was incorporated into Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, nevertheless, not in a full extent.

After a long period of postponement and rewriting, the draft act was adopted by the government in autumn 2009 and the parliament passed the act on 1st December 2009.

Subsequent legislative provisions are in the process of development.

The first one, the decree of the Ministry of Education No. 97/2010 Coll., has set details concerning i.a.

- the application for continuing education programmes;
- educational programme documentation; and
- certificates on completing the programme.

Accreditation of educational programmes is now more strictly regulated, in contrast to the regulation set by earlier Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education.

Furthermore, and in contrast to the earlier regulation, only programmes aligned to the future National System of Qualifications (encompassing qualifications, and as a novelty also partial qualifications) are envisaged to be eligible for the accreditation by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for continuing education. Sticking to respective qualification standards set within the newly established NSQ is the first precondition to be met and assessed positively by the Accreditation Commission.

In contrast to the Strategy, non-formal and informal learning settings were not explicitly addressed by this act and respective terms not used in its final wording. The same applies for subsequent legislative provisions already elaborated.

Nevertheless, § 17 of this act speaks about “verification and assessment” of professional competence of interested people by means of specific examination. Validation of “outcomes”, while only outcomes related to education (and not learning) are explicitly mentioned, should also stick to “qualification standards” and “assessment standards” set together with the newly established NSQ.

Only the institution authorised by the Ministry of Education will be allowed to perform such examination. This authorisation is conditioned by a positive recommendation of the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education following the detailed application procedure, for which only schools with accredited continuing education programmes are eligible.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance policies in Slovakia. It is included in the measures listed in the latest strategy paper of the government - Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 approved on 4th June 2008, within the priority area Education, and the National Reform Programme 2008-2010 from 8th October 2008. The intention to innovate the accreditation of “non-formal education” programmes and recognition of their results is confirmed in the implementation report to the National Reform Programme 2008-2010, approved by the government in October 2009. According to this report, the new procedures, affecting also “non-formal education”, should contribute to increasing the participation in lifelong learning.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

It is a governmental policy, however, the efficiency of its implementation will heavily depend on the newly to be established Accreditation Commission and its accreditation practice. The Ministry of Education will remain the most important player in this field, as the act is focusing on IVET related qualifications and not going to offer an overarching regulation covering all sectors, as stipulated by § 1(2) of this act and confirmed by § 8(3). Nevertheless, schools authorised to perform examinations of people interested in “verification and assessment” of their professional competence are key players as well.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The policy was expected to contribute to increasing the supply of qualified labour force, to increasing employability of individuals and raising participation of adults in lifelong learning. The crisis caused a weaker demand for the labour force, and a cautious approach of the Ministry of Education reduced the potential impact of the policy. As explained earlier, the act is not fully addressing LLL, in contrast to original intentions.

There are the following crucial contributions of this act worth stressing:

- Establishment of NSQ, setting descriptions of qualifications and partial qualifications;
- Introduction of the possibility to acquire (partial) qualification not only within formal IVET, but also through examinations based on accredited continuing education programmes and/or competences acquired by practice;
- Establishment of the information system for continuing education, which will contain three registers
 - Registry of educational institutions delivering accredited educational programmes;
 - Registry of accredited educational programmes;
 - Registry of graduates;
- Establishment of the system of forecasting and monitoring “educational needs” with relevant forecasting data published every three years within the aforementioned information system.

However, all measures are still in the initial phase only and it is too early to assess them. Nevertheless, some strong restrictions were applied in contrast to initial declarations. E.g., the aforementioned qualification and assessment standards have not yet been set and the new NSQ created, and therefore, it is not clear to what extent competences acquired by prior experiential practice will be made valid and practice accepted as a substitution for both initial VET and accredited continuing education programmes. Currently, high limitations embedded in qualifications (at least ISCED 3C level of education by a dominant share of qualifications) by level education attained are applied.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

The following indicators were explicitly stated to be monitored after the adoption of the Act on Lifelong Learning and subsequent legislative provisions:

- validation and verification system developed and launched;
- number of certified educational institutions;
- number of accredited non-formal learning programmes;
- number of certified teachers/lectors;
- number of authorised individuals/legal persons (schools) responsible for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- a system of lifelong guidance and counselling developed.

The Act on Lifelong Learning No. 568/2009 Coll. does not address non-formal and informal learning settings, as well as certification of educational institutions and certification of teachers/lectors.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies

The policy is predominantly education sector-driven and a closer cooperation of all sectors of economy will have to be strengthened in order to gradually cover all (partial) qualifications. In particular, cooperation with other sectoral ministries regulating specific qualifications as well as coherence with employment policy must be secured.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Implementation of the policy is at its beginning. Nevertheless, a delay in the policy was caused by the reluctance of brick and mortar institutions, which partly felt being endangered by this kind of policies and partly seriously objected a risk of softening qualification standards in case of insufficiently prepared methodology of verification.

Following obstacles were indicated by the SWOT analysis included in the Strategy:

- Resistance of employers and the formal system towards recognition of education (qualifications) obtained in the non-formal system;
- Lack of interest of the decisive sphere to create conditions for implementation of innovative features into the non-formal system and resistance of formal system to accept these features;
- Risk of devaluation of formal and non-formal education.

The first two obstacles mentioned above seem to contribute to the restrictive focus of this act. The overarching approach has been abandoned and Ministry of Education decided not to address sectoral qualifications regulated by specific sectoral legislative norms. In fact this act should better be called Lifelong Education Act, as it is predominantly focusing on continuing education. Expansion to other sectors is expected after successful translation into practice of

current portion of changes.

There are some signals of overregulation visible within the act. It is, however, too soon to assess the act as it is in a very early phase of implementation.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Implementation of declared deliveries are at risk of being hampered by a lack of know how.

- Increased efforts must be offered to the development of qualification and assessment standards required by the act with regard to setting NSQ;
- Appropriate linking of partial and full qualifications and their standards with respective professions and the National System of Occupations must be carefully rethought, in order to allow for the maximum flexibility and responsiveness to the labour market;
- It is necessary to interlink NSQ with the information system and its registries, as well as with guidance and counselling services;
- It will be necessary to carefully monitor functioning of the new Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Continuing Education. The statute of this commission has not been elaborated yet and the commission not yet established.

Subsequently, the methodology for verifying outcomes of non-formal and informal learning necessary for further expansion of the act to informal and non-formal learning settings should be at least indicated.

5. Source, legend

Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (in English),

www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATAEN/LifLearn/LLL_Strategy.rtf

Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning,

www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/568_2009.pdf

Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 97/2010 Coll.,

www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Vyhlasaky/97_2010.pdf

3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET

There is no specific national policy to promote geographical mobility of learners including teachers and trainers in VET. Mobility is still considered a sort of benefit for students and an opportunity to make their training more attractive for, and it is also meant to be a benefit for staff. Active teachers and trainers, or active directors of schools, apply for mobility due to their own interest and not as a consequence of a specific strategy, unless the attractiveness of visiting and its impact on performance of visiting subjects has a sort of strategic impact. Mobility is rarely seen as an instrument to support plurality and specialisation in training. The dominant benefit from mobility for students is the experience with a new environment at schools and enterprises, of which a cultural diversity is often much more pronounced than a difference in learning opportunities. Although there is no specific regulation in place on the assessment of skills and competences acquired during mobility experience and concerning the certification, schools gradually learn how to work with Europass and they put more emphasis on value added of mobilities in terms of identified skills.

For teachers and trainers, however, visiting other VET institutions is an important source of innovative efforts. The contact with other practice has a serious impact on their work at home, and the international contacts between schools should be seen as a much more efficient contribution to adjusting schools to reforms than policy strategies full of non-materialised proposals.

Although, as already mentioned, there is no national policy focusing on mobility, self-governing regions or mayors, who are closer to schools than the central government, can be helpful in supporting mobility. E.g., the Trenčín Self-Governing Region prepared a dedicated platform within the regional office website, in coordination between departments of education and regional development, offering an easy access to relevant information and data for schools under their responsibility. It can be seen as a valuable support for schools looking for mobility opportunities.

The programmes financed by the EU dominate. Besides LLLP, also INTERREG and later European cross-border cooperation, and even bilateral cooperation between regions and cities, offer opportunities for international cooperation of schools. There is, however, no national statistics about all international cooperation and mobility effects. Total numbers of students sent for placements abroad by their home schools are not known. The following are data offered by the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC), which is the LLLP National Agency.

Table 3.6: Mobility projects submitted and selected in 2002-2009

Number of applications	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel
Mob. projects	150	102	130	72	288	214	311	221	130*	110*	113	90	126	90	209	104

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

Notes: * Leonardo da Vinci data only, other data missing
sub – submitted applications, sel – selected

Table 3.7: Mobility projects grants selected for financing broken by programmes in 2002-2009

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mobility projects total*	102	72	214	221	110	90	90	104
of which LdV mobility grants	39	54	81	94	110	90	90	102
of which LdV IVT	18	28	42	55	51	64	61	67
LdV PLM						6	8	8
LdV VETPRO						20	21	27

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

Notes: * including LdV, Grundvig, Comenius and Socrates

IVT - Transnational Placements in Enterprises or Training Institutions for Trainees in Initial Vocational Training, PLM - Transnational Placements in Enterprises or Training Institutions for People in the Labour Market, VETPRO - Placement and Exchanges - Mobility for Professionals in Vocational Education and Training

Table 3.8: Individual mobility grants* of staff and students in 2007-2009

Number of applications	2007		2008		2009	
	submitted	selected	submitted	Selected	submitted	selected
Individual mobility grants	470	244	492	263	448	327

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

Note: * containing Cedefop study visits, Comenius IST and Assistantship, Grundtvig IST, Visits and Exchanges, LLP preparatory visits

As visible from the tables above, the interest in participation in mobility activities is just partly covered due to limited sources, despite manoeuvring of the LLLP agency ready to reallocate funds from the other, less popular programmes to support the mobility in the wider extent. Nevertheless, in particular the secondary VET mobility is hampered by a lack of co-financing from national/local sources and the limited knowledge of foreign languages. Thus, interested students from poor families and with poor language proficiency are disadvantaged.

In the area of VET there are about 1 200 pupils and 90 young workers taking part in the placement activity under the Leonardo da Vinci programme per year.

For instance, placements for 936 secondary school students and 79 individuals on the labour market, and 183 mobilities of professionals were approved within the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme in 2008. Further 981 placements for IVT pupils, 56 individuals at the labour market and 176 mobilities under the VETPRO action were approved in 2009.

In contrast to this, 24 600 tertiary students studying abroad (representing 10.2 % of all tertiary students) is a comparably very high number, according to the 2007 Eurostat “Mobility of students in Europe” data. In contrast to the aforementioned 10.2 % outflow, the inflow of ISCED 5+6 students is very low, just 0.5 % of all tertiary students in the country.

In the 2008/2009 academic year (application 2008), higher education institutions under Erasmus University Charter sent out 2 153 students for study and placements, 681 teachers for teaching assignments and 130 other higher education staff for miscellaneous mobility, which represents a significant increase compared to a previous year. As for 2009/2010 academic year (application 2009), the numbers are higher in all categories – the schools planned to send out 2 002 students for study and 407 students for placements, as far as 717 teachers and 178 other staff members, but the interim reports show that not all numbers will be kept according to the plan.

The opportunities offered within LLLP for teaching staff and other VET professionals are visible from the table below.

Table 3.9: Individual mobility grants for staff 2007-2009

LLL programme	2007	2008	2009
Cedefop – Study visits	14	20	37
Comenius – In-service training	81	66	86
Grundtvig – In-service training	38	32	27
Comenius – Assistants	15	15	17
Grundtvig – Assistants	0	0	0
Grundtvig – Visits & exchanges	0	0	11

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

The basic trends in the mobility of learners differ according to the type of institutions:

- It can be stated that there is an increasing interest of the participants, but decreasing interest of secondary schools to organise placements for students. There is a shift visible in the schools’ interest towards the partnership projects that are much more easily manageable. This tendency has a negative influence on the quality of mobility, as far as the “partnership mobility” mostly does not have any real impact on the education/training process at the home school. In comparison to the target group of IVT pupils, the interest to

organise mobility for IVT teachers (VETPRO actions) is at the same level as it was in previous years;

- There is a raising interest of higher education institutions in mobility of all target groups;
- Participation of enterprises in VET mobility schemes is remaining almost none, due to the fact that there are neither dual, nor sandwich schemes of training in Slovak schools. Moreover, the enterprises do not take advantage of possibilities to send their staff abroad for further training (this is only done by private organisations dealing with education or training, but not in other sectors).

The following are mobility project impacts considered as the most significant by the LLLP agency:

- The major impact was definitely on the personality of participants, especially within the IVT and PLM target groups, where mainly youngsters, after their placements, became more self-reliant, more experienced, being aware of their knowledge, competences and experience that could have helped them in the future. They gained a lot of personal, professional and language skills and became more motivated to continue in their studies even after finishing them at the IVET level;
- Mobility projects have also had a significant impact on organisations implementing the projects. They were influenced by new experience of participants, new approaches to vocational education and training, attempts to adopt their curricula and training programmes to actual requirements of labour market, not only at the national, but also European level. Projects encouraged organisations to become open to new approaches and new ideas in vocational training of their pupils and employees in order to become competitive on the labour market. Some institutions, mainly secondary vocational schools and universities, established placements abroad as part of their curricula. On the base of gained experience language education was improved, too;
- Mobility projects resulted in the improvement of professional competences, as well as foreign language competences, not only in terms of everyday language, but mainly when it comes to the specific terminology and language in the field concerned. For those taking part in mobility activities better positions on the labour market could be observed. In many cases it led to their early employment, even in organisations that provided placements.

There are no country specific examples of policy measures worth highlighting in this field. Nevertheless, there are examples of success stories as e.g. the following two Leonardo da Vinci projects and one Interreg IIIA project:

- Within the first Leonardo da Vinci project 25 students of car mechanic specialization carried out their placements abroad in order to gain “above standard” skills in their trade and also languages. Work programmes of IVT trainees were prepared very well in close cooperation of the sending organisation and receiving companies. It was in line with curricula, but at the same time trainees worked with modern technology facilities, which are unreachable at their training centre in Slovakia. They were involved in real working life, which was very important in this kind of traineeship (project No. SK/09/LDV/IVT/01-93210588);
- The second Leonardo da Vinci project contributed to the process of professionalization and building of capacities of NGOs in Slovakia. It addressed i.a. the management of human resources, including management of volunteers, and project management. The essential thematic framework was focused on the intercultural dimension of contemporary societies, which was addressed by all partner organisations. The project provided 12-week placements for six representatives of various Slovak NGOs (SK/08/LDV/PLM/0183220183);

- The main aim of the project carried out within the cross-border cooperation was to show how IVET is made attractive for girls in Austria (the neighbouring federal state Burgenland). Girls from the last grades of basic schools in Slovakia participated in this project. At first, trainers demonstrated how some types of machinery components are manufactured. Subsequently, girls produced their own products, supervised by trainers. Girls have increased their knowledge through theoretical presentation, practical demonstration and production of own products. The project coordinated by the Economic Chamber of Burgenland attracted big interest from participants.

4. Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

Policy progress

There is no tradition in forecasting skill needs and there is no reliable data on this either at regional or national level. There is no genuine know-how available for identification and anticipation of skill needs. In fact, there was no interest in this kind of data in the period of high unemployment, and the first efforts to anticipate skill needs emerged with a decrease of unemployment after entering EU. The dissatisfaction of employers with graduate supply in both qualification distribution and graduate skills resulted in three kinds of research activities:

- regional development driven;
- employer interests driven; and
- central government driven.

Self-governing regions, permanently under the pressure to restructure networks of schools and study programmes due to the population decline and harsh fiscal restrictions, recognised that they need to apply a double strategy in setting regional educational policies. Instead of “rationalisation” pushed by financing per capita and reflecting students and their parents preferences in the decision about selection of schools and study programmes it becomes inevitable for them to be more sensitive to the mismatch in demand and supply on the labour market and to reflect labour market needs. Self-governing regions with a short history of the responsibility for the establishment of VET schools (since 2002, followed by the substantial administrative reconstruction since 2004) started to develop regional development plans, in which for the first time economic development and human resource development had to be addressed. Some regions worked on this more deeply within the ESF learning region projects (see the example below).

Employers gradually started to face problems in recruiting workers in the 2000s and started to analyse the labour market, including the supply of VET graduates, in order to push schools to follow their needs. As a consequence, diverse ad hoc surveys were conducted, of which the following two were the most important: a survey done by the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Žilina, appointed to do so by its national headquarters after a debate with the Minister of Education, and a survey of the Automotive Industry Association of Slovakia, aimed at the estimation of numbers of missing professions.

At the same time, the government came under pressure of employers lacking work force as a consequence of booming economy. Having absorbed unemployed qualified workers, employers criticised more harshly the deterioration of VET school graduates supply. In 2007, first two surveys at least partly aimed at anticipation of skill needs were conducted by research institutes on the request of the government. The State Institute of Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education conducted the “Sectoral Analysis of Employers’ Needs and Graduates’ Readiness to Enter Labour Market in the Slovak Republic”, and the Institute for Labour and Family Research under Ministry of Labour conducted the “Analysis of Skills Need and Structure of Labour Supply Skills at the Regional Labour Market and Draught of Regional Employment Policy Measures”. In October 2009, the government discussed the information on forecasting labour market needs and skill needs submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family on its own initiative as a reaction to the EU “New Skills for New Jobs” initiative and under the strong influence of Cedefop’s Skillsnet

project. For the first time labour demand was forecasted according to three categories of education (low, medium, high). The level of education up to ISCED 3C was labelled as low, ISCED 3A+4+5B (containing post-secondary non tertiary VET) as medium, and higher education as high. It must be stressed here that ISCED 3A level includes a strong VET component and post-secondary non tertiary VET is quite tiny in Slovakia.

This forecasting was based on the econometric model of the Institute of Economic Research of Slovak Academy of Sciences and its forecasting of the macroeconomic development of the Slovak Republic till 2020. In relation to labour market employment (absolute numbers, year to year change) and unemployment (absolute numbers, unemployment rates, year to year change) were forecasted, disaggregated into 8 regions. Forecasting of employment by NACE groups was offered as well.

Table 4.1: Employment and a share in employment by economic activity (in thousands and %)

	NACE	2008		2015		2020	
		In 1000s	%	In 1000s	%	In 1000s	%
Agriculture, fishing	A-B	79.9	3.6	90.1	4.0	75.6	3.3
Mining and quarrying	C	8.7	0.4	6.3	0.3	5.1	0.2
Manufacturing	D	544.2	24.3	533.7	23.5	554.9	24.3
Electricity, gas and water supply	E	33.3	1.5	31.7	1.4	31.4	1.4
Construction	F	182.9	8.2	182.0	8.0	182.2	8.0
Market services	G-I	656.5	29.3	693.7	30.5	712.5	31.2
Financial services	J-K	229.5	10.3	241.5	10.6	249.9	10.9
Public services	L-Q	502.1	22.4	492.9	21.7	474.2	20.7
Total	A-Q	2 237.1	100	2 271.9	100	2 285.8	100

Source: Institute of Economic Research of Slovak Academy of Sciences, tabled by authors

Out of three scenarios (low, medium, high) the second one was used for forecasting labour demand according to three categories of education. A year on year increase about 4-5 % in higher education demand is expected for the whole period till 2020, as a consequence of a heavily unsaturated market with demand strongly exceeding supply. After few years of stagnation caused by the crisis a year on year increase of about 1-2 % is forecasted for secondary education demand for the next period. Low level education is expected to decrease with an accelerated decrease close to the end of the period, dropping from 39.3 % share in demand in 2008 down to 22.9 % in 2020. In contrast, labour demand for higher educated is expected to increase from current 15.8 % up to 26.0 % in 2020.

The importance of prevention from the mismatch between demand and supply on the labour market and conducting periodical forecasting of demand and supply, the anticipation of skill needs on the regional and sectoral basis based on surveying skill needs in enterprises has been promoted by this governmental paper.

Two initiatives to improve monitoring of the labour market and to anticipate future trends have been recently launched, cofunded by the ESF. The first one under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the second one under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in cooperation with the public employment service institution, Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, has started to develop a system of forecasting labour market needs within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion National Project XIV-2 “System for Surveying Emerging and Vanishing Working Positions and Forecasting Labour Market Needs”. In December 2009, the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family launched a tender to identify a provider of methodology, data and interpretation of collected data for annual forecasting of labour needs in order to develop a system aimed at monitoring labour market needs (and *expressis verbis* at “emerging and lost working places”). Medium and short-term forecasting of labour market needs by regions, broken by NACE and ISCO classifications, should be carried out.

The Ministry of Education prepared a national ESF project “National System of Qualifications in the Context of Continuing Education Supported by Guidance and Counselling System”, within which monitoring and anticipating of “educational needs” that must reflect anticipation of skill needs is envisaged. The project conducted by Academia Istropolitana was planned to start in 2010. Within its activity 1.4 Monitoring and forecasting educational/learning needs, the know-how to map, assess and forecast qualification requirements should have been developed. Identified qualification requirements are declared to be a basis for future education policies meeting labour market needs.

Strengths and weaknesses in identifying and anticipating skill needs

The early identification of skill needs in regions has developed into an urgent policy since 2004. After the period of ignoring skills mismatch on the labour market in the 1990s and early 2000s, two key players undertook initiatives under the pressure of entrepreneurs. A system of monitoring labour market, surveying educational needs as well as forecasting needed changes in the education system and in lifelong learning was envisaged by the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, elaborated by the Ministry of Education and approved by the government on 25th April 2007. This resulted in the two aforementioned ad hoc studies commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

The aforementioned 2009 Information on Forecasting Labour Market Needs played a crucial role for sensitization of all stakeholders for the support of systemic forecasting of labour needs in Slovakia. In 2010, two ESF cofunded important activities aimed at know-how development have started.

A long period of disregarding this topic as well as a long period of destruction of research capacities created a serious problem for the development of methodologies and attracting experienced researchers to participate at the aforementioned ESF projects. There is no institution involved in the long-term research in anticipation of skill needs nation-wide. There is no experience with national employer surveying. Although forecasting of the macroeconomic development is well developed at the Institute of Economic Research of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the adjustment of the model to focus on detailed labour market needs is in a very early stage.

In support of forecasting labour market needs a specific Measure 3.3.B was set within the 2004-2006 ESF Operational Programme Human Resources. Nevertheless, no project was submitted and as a consequence, planned sources were reallocated. This clearly indicates a lack of research capacities. It is a pity that within the 2004-2006 programming period, with

common operational programmes for the two ministries, a nationally recognised methodology was not agreed and research capacities were not assured. Currently, both ministries run their own operational programmes and there is a risk of insufficient coherence between two initiatives, despite the fact that the ministries signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and the renewal of the National System of Qualifications under responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the National System of Occupations under responsibility of Labour Ministry also assumes the cooperation of both ministries in the field of forecasting and anticipating labour market needs.

Nevertheless, respective sectoral initiatives are at risk of sectoral bias. The recent experience with ad hoc surveys clearly indicates a sectoral focus. The aforementioned survey carried out by the State Institute of Vocational Education focused “on key knowledge, skills and competences of future graduates of secondary VET schools” and therefore its analysis was only limited to IVET graduates. Within the aforementioned study of the Institute for Labour and Family Studies a sociological employer survey was conducted to study vacancies and the mismatch between the labour market demand and job seeker supply. The analysis was dominantly aimed at the identification of missing qualifications and occupations according to ISCO and at the efficiency of employment policies. The identification of skills and competences was only partly addressed.

Although Academia Istropolitana successfully contributed to the development of the LLL strategy within the previous ESF period project “Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the Labour Market”, it failed in “creating and implementing a system for monitoring, research and design of educational needs” envisaged by the project. Outlining some preconditions of implementing such a system (by describing a “model of surveying educational needs” in a general way), instead of the development of relevant and ready to use instruments, results in a need for restarting similar activities. The Ministry of Education expects that Academia Istropolitana will succeed at its second attempt, as it was again selected for the ESF national project on NSQ within the Operational Programme Education containing a monitoring and forecasting component.

Hopefully, the inability to adopt a trans-sectoral approach and to learn from the international experience in the development of appropriate know-how will not be perpetuated.

A precondition of future success is also a closer cooperation between the two institutions envisaged to perform these two ESF projects: Academia Istropolitana and the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Funding available from the ESF created conditions for both attracting quality experts and learning from the international experience, however, the aforementioned failures from the 2004-2006 ESF period are warning.

An example of initiative directly aimed at identifying and anticipating skill needs cannot be offered here. The recent activities described in detail above are either immature or have a different primary focus. Furthermore, activities of newly created regional and sectoral councils are just starting (see chapter 4.3). The following is an example of regional activity reflecting the EU learning regions initiative, within which regional authorities in cooperation with researchers tried to identify and anticipate skills needs within a wider comprehensive action. The Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region results are considered an example of successful implementation of the idea of learning regions.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Creating the system of lifelong learning and guidance in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region (The ESF project carried out since 16th November 2006 to 31st October 2008.)

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

There are big differences among regions in Slovakia in economic performance, employment and labour productivity. As LLL is considered one of the key factors in regions' development, pilot lifelong learning projects were launched in 7 of 8 Slovak regions aiming at stimulating the development and increasing the competitiveness of regions through involving key actors in lifelong learning.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

Create an easy accessible system of lifelong learning and guidance in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region.

Specific project objectives:

- increasing participation of economically active population in continuing education;
- creating efficient links between lifelong learning and local and regional labour market needs through active involvement of schools, educational institutions, employers, professional associations and chambers, and self-government in lifelong learning strategy implementation;
- increasing the number and enhancing the quality of lifelong learning programmes, including the introduction of new forms of education (distance education, e-learning);
- promoting in-service training of pedagogical staff;
- increasing the quality of delivered information on lifelong learning possibilities, and increasing the quality of career guidance in this area.

Project results planned:

- functional regional network of educational institutions;
- databases of educational programmes;
- overview of current and future labour market needs;
- identified employers' needs and subsequent supply of new forms of continuing education programmes;
- overview of needs of economically active population interested in finding new possibilities for self-fulfilment.

(c) Target groups

- Inhabitants of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, in particular adults
- Institutionally
 - Employers
 - Public/State administration
 - Educational institutions

(d) Status of implementation

The project was completed in October 2008. The following results were declared:

- Partnership of educational institutions, self-governing and state administration bodies, labour offices, non-governmental institutions, Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, enterprises, has been established;
- Website containing information on project's activities and outputs has been developed www.celozivotne.sk;
- On-line database containing information on possibilities for lifelong learning (information on courses) has been developed www.celozivotne.sk/ganet/vuc/bb/vzdelavanie.nsf/aktivita.htm;
- Sociological survey among selected employers in the region - needs analysis in districts was carried out focusing on employers' requirements and expectations regarding potential job applicants for first-level and middle-level management positions and operations positions;
- Skill needs survey was carried out focused on regional and local needs of employers and labour market in the region. Results are presented in the document "Sociological Research of Selected Employers in the Banská Bystrica Region" (available at the website www.celozivotne.sk mentioned above);
- Between January and April 2007 the Faculty of Economics of Matej Bel University carried out a survey focused on identification of future regional and local labour market needs (available at the website www.celozivotne.sk);
- Learning centres have been created at four secondary schools with the aim to provide
 - room and conditions appropriate for learners' independent formal, non-formal and informal learning;
 - technical equipment and materials needed for independent learning (multimedia equipment, Internet, study literature);
 - guidance with regard to independent learning and career guidance;
- Integrated Guidance Centre has been created at Secondary Vocational School of Post and Telecommunications in Banská Bystrica, the secondary school in the regional seat, with the aim to provide:
 - comprehensive information on educational activities (formal, non-formal and informal learning) appropriate for client matching his/her current career profile with anticipated economic development in a given region;
 - career guidance;
- Training took place aimed at
 - learning centres and Integrated Guidance Centre staff;
 - teachers of secondary schools and school establishments established by the self-governing region (ICT and e-learning).

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The initiative was implemented at the regional level.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The project was carried out within the ESF Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, Measure 3.2 "Increasing the Scope, Improvement and Broader Provision of Further Education with a View to Improving the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees".

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Office of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Department of Education and Human Resources (coordinator);
- Faculty of Economics of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (main research partner).

Partners in the initiative are listed at

(www.celozivotne.sk/ganet/vuc/bb/vzdelavanie.nsf/pages/96E755FDDCFD4FAFC12572A3004F3C1D)

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

No results of assessment of effectiveness or efficiency are available. Nevertheless, relations among regional players established within the project are of specific value and the network keeps working.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

Four out of five aforementioned centres are fully functional, valued by clients; the fifth centre is functional, however, facing some problems.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The project belonged to the pilot projects focused on lifelong learning regions carried out in 7 out of 8 self-governing regions of the Slovak Republic. Experience from pilot projects was reflected during development of National Programme of Learning Regions, approved at 10th meeting of the Ministry of Education Gremium on 15th May 2007. Projects were supposed to continue within the new ESF programming period.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

This kind of projects are very sensitive to the quality of cooperation. Some other regions in Slovakia failed in learning region project due to the inability of coordinator to establish a fruitful partnership. In this region the office of self-governing region finally managed this. It is a strong administrative player and it was important that in contrast to some other regions it was involved in the project. Furthermore, after the initial period of unclear relations, it also managed to attract players outside its direct influence for active and fruitful cooperation (e.g. NGOs and the university).

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

According to the National Programme of Learning Regions the projects were envisaged to continue within the 2007-2013 ESF programming period. Nevertheless, despite the support to learning regions and to creation of networks in continuing education was identified

among framework activities within the Operational Programme Education, Priority Axis 2 “Continuing Education as an Instrument of Human Resource Development”, Measure 2.1 “Support of Continuing Education”, no call for the national project on lifelong learning regions has been set yet.

5. Source, legend

Project website: www.celozivotne.sk

4.2 Integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision

Main approaches to incorporation of anticipated skill needs into VET provision and guidance

VET provision in Slovakia has been dominantly supply driven since 1989. Under the pressure of per capita financing and a decline of population, VET schools finally reflected almost exclusively school input market – desires and preferences of students and their parents. For survival of VET schools the satisfaction of students’ and parents’ educational needs was more important than the needs of employers who were for a long time satisfactorily served by an army of qualified unemployed. Identification and anticipation of skill needs was not considered a hot issue. Although schools understood that disregarding labour market needs was not possible for a longer period, there were no policies to benefit school managers trying to align graduates structure and skills to employers’ needs. The only feedback instrument available for regulation of school and programme networks was an analysis of profiles of unemployed VET school graduates. Thus, no detailed skills analysis was done and a pressure on elimination of the surplus of respective programme graduates rather than elimination of training of obsolete skills was stressed. Furthermore, the mismatch between a field of study and a field of employment as well as squeezing out from working positions of less qualified by overqualified graduates remained unobserved. There was no basic data about assertion on the labour market, and the links between VET provision and the labour market remained uncovered by research.

Nevertheless, individual schools and even regions facing the disproportion in the relevant segment of the labour market were gradually pushed into actions. Schools that were not satisfied with the numbers of newly enrolled students were active in reprofiling the provision of VET in terms of study/training branches and also in terms of skills. Although the curriculum development was centralised till 2008, curricular documents were permanently innovated under an initiative of schools in the effort to attract students but also to attract employers. There were 244 study and training branches curricula of secondary VET schools innovated during 2003-2007.

In the process of development of new curricula the DACUM (abbreviation for Developing a Curriculum) method to carry out occupational analysis using the team work of experienced specialists guided by a facilitator was used within the ESF SOP Human Resources project Improving Quality of Vocational Education and Training in the Slovak Republic at ISCED 3C level (September 2005 – December 2007). This project performed by the State Institute of Vocational Education finally affected 15 ISCED 3C study fields. The reflection of needs and requirements of entrepreneurial sphere based on a questionnaire survey, carried out in

selected regions and targeted on specific employers, contributed to better understanding of employers' needs becoming strongly emphasised within the incoming curricular reform.

Since 2008, with coming in force of Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. introducing curriculum decentralisation, schools have had to reflect labour market needs within the development of their school educational programmes. According to § 7(2), a school educational programme must be discussed with employers or employers' organisations with the responsibility to the respective field. Thus, although there were no research results and relevant statistical data on national basis, schools had to be active and gradually were pushed to reflect available information (usually based on local personal contacts) on skill needs and to incorporate them into VET provision.

Self-governing regions responsible for maintaining VET schools since 2002 and gradually better understanding their role started some initiatives to identify skill needs on the regional basis within the regional plans development and within the learning regions initiative (see the example of initiative in chapter 4.1). Not having the nationally agreed methodology available, they adopted diverse approaches, predominantly based on collecting informal data from employers, using ad hoc surveys (e.g. in cooperation with the university, as happened in the Banská Bystrica Region in the framework of learning region initiative).

With coming in force of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, the identification of labour market needs as the basis for regulation of VET is embedded in the legislation. The most affecting the everyday life of VET schools will be the "plan of labour market needs" to be elaborated by newly created sectoral councils, indicating the number of graduates needed in respective study/training branches for the following five years. The labour market needs analyses on this sectoral level as well as the regional analyses are expected to become a subject of debate within the newly created Regional VET Councils for elaboration of regional VET strategies, and subsequently within the newly created National VET Council (see the example of initiative describing VET councils in chapter 4.3). Study/training branches not indicated as required within the plans of labour market needs will become at risk of decline. After acceptance by the self-governing region and by the Ministry of Education these study/training branches will be fiscally disadvantaged due to the amendment of Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on financing regional schools introduced by the Act on VET.

Furthermore, Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning stipulates the establishment of the "system of monitoring and forecasting learning needs", forecasting job vacancies, and qualifications adjusted to labour market needs on the three year basis, offered disaggregated into regions, sectors, and levels of education. This data must also serve career guidance institutions, according to the specific requirements of this act.

Strengths and weaknesses

There is a much stronger legislative support for the cooperation of social partners in provision of IVET, corresponding to regional and sectoral economies needs, due to the legislation coming in force since 2008.

Schools are pushed by the 2008 Education Act to cooperate with employers in the development of their school educational programmes and employers got a very wide access to programming and provision of VET at all levels - individual school, regional and national levels. A manual elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education to assist schools in the development of school educational programmes addresses in detail the legislative

requirements to adjust the curriculum development to labour market needs. It deals with the analysis of labour market needs, analysis of occupations, and offers examples of questionnaires for employers, teachers and students to better match supply and demand. A “Questionnaire for Identification of Employers’ Needs and Requirements on VET School Graduates”, “Questionnaire for Students”, and “Questionnaire for Teachers” are offered in a ready to use format. Furthermore, the ESF project “Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes” contains specific training on analysis of labour market needs for the purpose of the development of school educational programmes.

Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. opened the door for a wide and deep assertion of employers’ needs into the provision of secondary VET. 2010 was the first year of operating of respective national and sectoral councils and the first results cannot be assessed yet. There is no questioning that self-governing regions, originally reshaping VET provision dominantly under fiscal pressure and capping expenditure by per capita funding, will have to take the new requirements into account. The quality of employers’ contribution to regional VET strategies will substantially depend on the quality of their data – and this is the crucial challenge coming from the Act on VET.

Apparently, the time needed for the development of quality methodology has been underestimated by the government. A period of lacking interest in employers’ points of view was replaced by a strong declaratory support, however, targeted efforts to gain and adjust know-how and to develop methodologies for collecting as much as possible reliable data have been insufficient so far.

It is too soon to assess to what extent employers will be able to provide the reliable data for sectoral and regional analyses. There is, however, a serious risk that instead of the reliable surveys aimed at identification and anticipation of skill needs, just the anecdotal data will be applied under the time pressure to satisfy the legislative pressure. Although there were sectors with experience in identification of labour market needs in terms of the structure and numbers of graduates, and partly also graduate profiles and their crucial skill (e.g. the automotive sector), there are also sectors (in decline or underdeveloped) with lacking experience in this kind of work. Slovakia suffers from a lack of experience in identification and anticipation of skill needs. It is not only due to the weak research capacities within research institutions, but also due to the absence of links between researchers and employers. There are no sectoral specialists among researchers, there are no sectoral specialists at employers’ side used to communicate with researchers and there is a very weak history of collecting data in this field. Thus, validity and reliability is highly at risk.

As visible from its aforementioned document submitted to the government in October 2009, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is currently more sensitive to the urgency of the development of the instrument for forecasting and anticipation of skill needs, as it is under the stronger pressure of socioeconomic situation. Nevertheless, sectoral and regional analyses envisaged by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET will soon create a demand for the comparison of used methodologies and for the development of more sophisticated know-how. Researchers are, however, not sufficiently prepared for this task, as there have been no research capacities with the focus on this field developed.

Although two acts prepared by the Ministry of Education envisaged monitoring labour market and anticipation of further development, there is little known about methodologies in support of activities required with regard to secondary VET. An information system in support of LLL occurred in 2010 offering only the shape rather than the fully working system filled with

information. Similarly to the unclear cooperation between the two segments of education, IVET and CVET/LLL, it is not yet clear how forecasting activities under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Education will be coordinated in order to benefit the education sector. It is very positive that the LLL information system will offer integrated data fed from both sectors.

There are no valid and reliable results of surveys directly aimed at identifying and anticipating skill needs. There is no genuine employers' surveying experience in Slovakia and recent activities explained in chapter 4.1 were either fragmented or suffered from the questionable methodology, or they were primarily focused on other topics. Therefore, it is not possible to offer evidence based examples of integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision as a result of systemic change.

There is, however, an example, where employers managed to introduce changes into VET provision. The initiative of the Association of Automotive Industry, the Guild of Motor Trades and Repairs, led to establishment of 13 pilot centres for motor trades and repairs areas nation-wide in 2003, fully corresponding to employers needs, as identified by the direct pressure of practice and practitioners rather than research based activities. The automotive industry has even conducted its own reform (see No Longer Waiting for Godot. In: Cedefop Info 3/2003) that became a model for other sectors facing a need to intervene into the sectoral VET and for regions attracted by the idea to establish VET centres (see the example on the ESF project aimed at the establishment of "Centres for VET and information" in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region in chapter 6.2) as well as for the new Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, stipulating creation of centres nation-wide. As the automotive industry is the country leading industry, there are also ESF projects focusing on the related field of study aimed at aligning education and training to employers' requirements. In spring 2007, the Ministry of Education decided to launch a national project "Developing New Education Programme in Vocational Training for the Needs of Automotive Industry". Within this project making use of the DACUM method, employers were invited to adjust the respective ISCED 3C graduates profiles to the needs of carmakers and to create a new ISCED 3C programme "mechanic specialist for the automotive production". The project was carried out within the 2004-2006 ESF programming period and it finished in autumn 2008. A new 2007-2013 ESF project "Developing New Education Programme in Vocational Training for the Needs of Automotive Industry II" was launched in April 2009 to continue in reforming the automotive related VET.

4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

2008 has been the turning point in the involvement of labour market actors in VET. The Education Act, coming in force in 2008, merged two VET streams: secondary vocational schools (SVS), originally closely linked with enterprises and dominantly providing ISCED 3C, and secondary specialised schools (SSS), offering dominantly ISCED 3A education focusing on academic VET. The 2009 Act on VET introduced the new architecture and the new philosophy in cooperation of the education sector and labour market actors, reviving the links of VET to labour market and businesses.

VET system development

In the 1990s, the VET system suffered from breaking the links to the world of work as a consequence of ongoing restructuring of economy. Enterprises not able to maintain SVS and facing privatisation remained in touch with VET schools only on personal basis. SVS evolved close to SSS, gradually reducing a share of practical training and increasing provision of ISCED 3A programmes to compete with SSS. Within the decentralisation reform eight self-governing regions were created, gradually fully responsible for almost all secondary schools. As a consequence, the Ministry of Education has remained the only central government body directly influencing secondary VET. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, originally maintaining sectoral SVS and responsible for quality of practical training, in fact lost their influence with marginal exceptions (health, police, justice/warder, military schools; in particular, the Ministry of Health enjoys the important autonomy towards IVET and CVET in the health sector). In order to attract students with a variety of interests, SVS, which were originally sectorally focused, became gradually multi-sectoral in provision of VET. Thus, SVS also started to provide training for professions outside their original focus. E.g., SVS originally offering programmes of mechanical engineering (which was for a certain period not attractive as the labour market was full of unemployed workers qualified in this field) started to offer also jewellery programmes, as they were attractive for students. Similarly, SVS offering agricultural programmes decided to offer construction sector programmes. Per capita funding pushed schools to attract students regardless of the school original profile and regardless of the labour market needs. In the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education signalled its efforts to start a VET reform, as demonstrated e.g. by the conclusions of the national VET conference in 2001. However, gradually challenged by the decentralisation reform and the need to reduce costs of regional schooling, VET reform initiatives were reduced to restructuring networks of schools and programmes and to the renewal of curricula - a shift from content based to competence driven VET became a mainstream in the curriculum development. Despite the decentralisation in management the curriculum development remained centralised and schools had to wait till 2008 for the right to develop their own educational programmes corresponding to the framework set by the state educational programmes. Although centralised till the 2007/2008 school year, individual schools and labour market actors had a chance to influence curriculum development via sectoral expert commissions created as the advisory bodies of State Institute of Vocational Education to collect innovative proposals and to discuss new curricula before their submission for approval to the Ministry of Education. In 2007, there were 15 sectoral expert commissions operating at the State Institute of Vocational Education with 299 experts, of which 149 experts were pedagogues from VET schools, 31 employers' representatives, 48 representatives of employers associations, federations, chambers and guilds, and 5 came from trade unions. However, due to the lack of genuine experts studying topic from the respective social partners' point of view, employers and trade unions were often represented by former pedagogues. Thus, participation of experts outside schools was typically based on the individual interest rather than it was institutionally backed. These expert commissions contributed to the development of 82 state educational programmes, offering the framework for the development of respective school educational programmes since 2008/2009. With the new cooperation architecture a role of these expert commissions declined and since autumn 2009 new bodies to strengthen cooperation of key players in VET have started to emerge.

Reform of governance and management

In contrast to the period till 2008, people outside the education sector are expected to take a lead in preparing strategy documents or supplying background data for respective policy papers.

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET stipulated the creation of VET councils on national, regional and sectoral levels in order to create space for confrontation of experience, specific data and points of view of stakeholders in order to contribute to coherence and comprehensiveness in policy making (see the example of initiative below).

Although the Ministry of Education has remained responsible for the development of overall VET strategies, the supply of sub-national strategies to the four-partite National VET Council and subsequently to the Ministry of Education is reglemented by this act:

- Sectoral strategies to be elaborated by respective sectoral ministries;
- Regional strategies to be elaborated by regional self-governing bodies;
- Plans of labour market needs to be elaborated by respective “sectoral assignees”.

“Sectoral assignees” for respective (sectoral) fields of study are legal bodies representing employers (e.g. chambers, employers associations). They have been agreed by the Ministry of Education and the representatives of employers, and set in Annex No. 8 of the Decree of the Education Ministry No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools. “Sectoral assignees” develop to crucial players in secondary IVET, according to the new legislation, and therefore, they are supported by Sectoral Councils established as advisory bodies to serve them.

Employers can also intervene into designing and assessing VET programmes, and developing and validating qualifications and standards. In addition, several acts on chambers were amended to enable them to cooperate with the Ministry of Education in enhancing the quality of IVET, in particular to supervise practical training within IVET and to delegate representatives to school leaving examination commissions at secondary VET schools. Significantly, under the pressure of employers, a number of hours of practical training has increased within the 2009 state educational programmes from about 800-900 hours to at least 1 200 hours for those ISCED 3A double qualification VET programmes that offer a “maturita” school-leaving certificate together with a certificate of apprenticeship. Although there is no genuine quality assurance system reflecting the European initiatives as CQAF and EQARF introduced, some features of quality assurance involving labour market actors are addressed within the aforementioned Act on VET.

According to § 4(2)b of Act on VET self-governing region is responsible for provision of information relevant for guidance and counselling to centres of educational guidance. This information should be based on labour market needs and VET provision corresponding to current status and regional strategy of VET.

Despite the partial improvement in financing VET (e.g. more detailed categorisation of schools for normatives) a further reform is inevitable. The Act on VET improved the possibility of employers to cofinance IVET. Specific costs of VET were clearly indicated as tax deductibles by this act, in contrast to the earlier situation, where employers cofinancing VET were at risk of being punished by tax offices due to the unclear legislation in this field. Furthermore, the VET Development Fund headed by the Minister of Education was established by this act to collect voluntary contributions from non-state subjects. With respect to financing the act is quite disappointing. Instead of the “train or pay” principle and levy

based obligatory funding, a voluntary funding was agreed, which makes the Fund vulnerable of illiquidity. Even worse, the current scheme of 2 % corporate tax to be allocated to non-governing organisations based on a free decision of tax payers should be gradually weakened under the pressure of the Ministry of Finance. VET schools, which used to collect means via their own affiliated NGOs, have already indicated their disappointment. In 2011, only 1.5 % of corporate tax can be assigned to NGOs with gradual decrease in following years. In the effort to increase the inflow of tax money to the state budget, the Ministry of Finance suggests corporations and self-employers to match a decrease in funding NGOs via tax credits by after-tax financial contributions. The Ministry of Finance argues that many corporations used to self-service their own NGOs. On the other hand, there is no evidence about effects of activities of respective NGOs and some NGOs of strong corporates evidently support education.

Strength and weaknesses

The period of isolation of VET from the world of work, resulting from restructuring economy and supply of qualified adult workers, is definitely over. The 2009 Act on VET philosophy emphasizes strongly the influence of labour market actors on the future development on VET. The establishment of diverse VET councils as advisory bodies of decision makers is very positive and creates conditions for multi-partisan agreements in formulating VET policies. There is, however, a serious risk of the insufficient supply of reliable and valid data for evidence based policy making, as a consequence of little experience of collecting relevant data and weak research capacities. In contrast to the earlier period of insufficient reflection of labour market needs, there is a risk of the incoming period of insufficient reflection of VET schools institutional stability needs under the pressure of short-term requirements of employers. Balancing the two markets needs – students' and parents' needs in the education services market in the input of the school, and labour market needs in the output of the school, as well as the balancing short-term needs with long-term needs induced by the urgent shift to knowledge-based economy, is the most urgent challenge for all levels of policy makers.

In contrast to programming and assessing VET, where cooperation with labour market actors seems to be well addressed at the level of individual VET programmes, there is still a weakness visible with regard to some systemic changes urgently needed.

Guidance and counselling is dominantly based on the reflection of current status of VET and efforts to overcome current problems the clients are exposed to. As commented in chapter 5.2, the ESF national projects (National Projects VII, VIIA, VIIB from the 2004-2006 programming period, and the subsequent National Project VII-2 within the new 2007-2013 programming period) performed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, were aimed at the improvement of active labour market policies. Ways to improve respective services are discussed there. (For policies see part on lifelong guidance in chapter 3.1).

There is, however, a lack of data about the future development of VET, as a consequence of insufficient attention paid to the development of quality methodology for identification and anticipation of future needs, as mentioned in chapter 4.1, creating unfavourable conditions for improvement of guidance and counselling services. It is expected that within the 2007-2013 programming period the large ESF National Project "National System of Qualifications in the Context of Continuing Education Supported by Guidance and Counselling System", to be conducted by Academia Istropolitana since 2010, should contribute to comprehensive solutions, together with the LLL information system introduced by Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on

Lifelong Learning (already under development, see also www.iedu.sk). There is, however, very likely too much expected from this ESF project. Instead of launching more projects with one primary focus corresponding to the respective Copenhagen tools, the planned project is very wide in its scope and too demanding concerning its management.

The introduction of the national quality assurance system is still pending, although the enhanced involvement of employers in monitoring quality, stipulated by the Act on VET, is a positive step.

In contrast to secondary VET, improvement is visible in the tertiary sector, where two sources of quality assessment are available. The Accreditation Commission, a government affiliated advisory body, assessed all public higher education institutions and some private institutions, according to the set of indicators within to the so-called comprehensive accreditation, in autumn 2008. Assessed schools were categorised into three categories resulting in future in fiscal benefits for institutions from better performing categories. Comprehensive accreditation continues according to the plan to assess subsequently all higher education institutions and to repeat this procedure every six years. This comprehensive accreditation is at least partly focusing on real achievements of institutions in contrast to the regular accreditation process that is purely input based and assesses preconditions of the provision of tertiary programmes. Furthermore, a private Academic Ranking and Rating Agency (ARRA) continued to evaluate higher education institutions issuing rankings of universities and their constituents, categorised in compliance with the Frascati Manual.

The 2007-2013 ESF national project “External Evaluation of School Quality Supporting Self-Evaluation Processes and School Development”, performed by the State School Inspection within the Operational Programme Education, should provide for the know-how for performance based assessment of schools. The reflection of European initiatives in this field is, however, a big weakness, due to the lack of English speaking experts. Slovakia failed to participate in a full extent in ENQA-VET and faces problems in implementing the EQARF initiative into practice. Hopefully, this project will contribute to improvement in this field.

The following example addressing the need of involvement of labour market actors in VET brings the national policy introduced by legislation.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>New VET governance architecture (introduced by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET)</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>VET schools suffered from broken links to enterprises in the 1990s, caused by the dramatic restructuring of the national economy, within which old institutional relations were broken and new ones were not established. Furthermore, VET schools concentrated on the provision of VET demanded by students and their parents rather than on VET demanded by the labour market. It was caused by the financing scheme rewarding schools for massive production, disregarding from the quality and alignment to labour market needs, and due to</p>

unclear conditions in the labour market, in particular in regions lagging behind in restructuring. In the 2000s, and in particular after entering the EU and subsequent growth of economy, the revitalisation of links between VET and the world of work became an urgent issue.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, coming in force since 1st September 2009, specifies in detail the rights of stakeholders. It envisaged the establishment of four-partite Regional VET Councils - advisory bodies affiliated to self-governing regions and similarly a four-partite National VET Council affiliated to the government to cover trans-regional topics. Councils consist of representatives of state administration, self-governing administration, employers and representatives of trade unions and/or employees' councils; that is why they are called "four-partite".

National and Regional VET Councils were envisaged for coordination at the national and regional levels, and Sectoral VET Councils were envisaged for specific activities with regard to respective sectoral VET.

"Sectoral assignees" for respective (sectoral) fields of study were identified and set in Annex No. 8 of the Decree of the Education Ministry No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools. These legal bodies representing employers (e.g. chambers, employers associations, etc.) should guarantee the assertion of interests of employers in provision of VET.

According to § 5(3) of the Act on VET "sectoral assignees"

- a) develop the plans of labour market needs in VET and submit them to the National and Regional VET Councils;
- b) submit labour market requirements for the qualified labour force to the National VET Council;
- c) prepare background documents for setting requirements for professional skills and practical experience needed for performance of activities relevant to working positions in the labour market;
- d) contribute to the development of VET graduate profiles and required knowledge, skills, abilities and working habits, normatively set requirements for equipment in terms of facilities, materials and devices, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education;
- e) give expertise on the content of vocational component of the "maturita" school leaving exams (ISCED 3A) and final exams (ISCED 3C);
- f) contribute to the development of textbooks, learning aids and learning texts;
- g) can provide VET schools with materials, technology and facilities;
- h) can provide for the experts from practice for delivery of in-service training for vocational subject teachers, trainers and instructors;
- i) provide for the training of instructors;
- j) provide for the training of delegated representatives of professional organisations to school leaving exam commissions (for the vocational component of "maturita" exams and final exams);
- k) cooperate in the development of school educational programmes in compliance with the secondary VET schools' needs.

To be able to cover the assigned tasks, the creation of Sectoral VET Councils serving as advisory bodies to "sectoral assignees" is envisaged by legislation. Sectoral VET Councils are composed predominantly of representatives of employers chaired by the president of "sectoral assignee" institution and co-chaired by the representative of respective sectoral ministry and by the representative of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The Ministry of Education is not represented, nevertheless, the sectoral expert of the State Institute of Vocational Education is an obligatory member to take care of the compatibility of Sectoral VET Council's proposals with educational legislation.

Sectoral councils are expected to play a crucial role in particular in identification and anticipation of sectoral skill needs and translate them into plans of labour market needs in terms of numbers of graduates in respective study/training branches for following five years. Furthermore, they are expected to provide for inputs for education sector experts to align graduates profiles to professional competences required on sectoral working positions. Thus, in contrast to earlier conditions, employers are expected to participate more deeply at the elaboration of profiles of VET graduates and at setting requirements on knowledge, skills, abilities and working habits, as well as on elaboration of school educational programmes.

Self-governing regions assisted by Regional VET Councils have to develop regional VET strategies expected to be worked out in close cooperation with social partners, in particular employers. These regional strategies should be fed by the aforementioned plans of labour market needs and by explications of labour market needs on secondary VET qualifications.

Objectives:

- Establishment of the National VET Council, 8 Regional VET Councils and Sectoral Councils (final number of councils is currently still under discussion);
- Development of papers
 - According to § 3(4) of this act, sectoral VET papers aimed at analysis of sectoral skills and future training of students for sectoral occupations are to be periodically prepared by respective sectoral ministries (Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment). These sectoral strategies are envisaged for discussion during the May meeting of the National VET Council, according to its 2010 work programme;
 - According to § 4(2)a of this act, self-governing regions in cooperation with regional key players (including social partners and also labour offices seated at the capitals of self-governing regions) are responsible for elaboration of regional strategies of VET. Thus, there will be 8 strategies as there are 8 regions in Slovakia. There were 7 strategies already submitted for discussion to the National VET Council in March 2010, after discussion at four-partite Regional VET Councils;
 - According to § 5(3)a of this act, the aforementioned respective “sectoral assignees” stipulated by the decree of the Ministry of Education are responsible for the elaboration of plans of labour market needs, indicating the number of graduates needed in respective study/training branches for the following five years. Papers of 5 “sectoral assignees” offering “plans of labour market needs” for 13 fields of study were already submitted for discussion to the meeting of National VET Council held in March 2010.

(c) Target groups

- VET experts and practitioners;
- VET administrators.

(d) Status of implementation

Key players in terms of provision of relevant knowledge and data reflecting sectoral development with regard to the labour market, progress in technology and other relevant socioeconomic features, are representatives of employers agreed by key players and legislatively set.

The Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools lists in its Annex 8 “sectoral assignees” for 23 out of 30 fields of study. “Sectoral assignees” have

not yet been identified for seven fields of study (in which cooperation of labour actors is less urgent). These “sectoral assignees” are e.g. the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The National Union of Employers, Federation of Employers' Associations, Slovak Chamber of Mines, Slovak Chamber of Agriculture and Food, etc. Some of them are responsible for more sectors or assist other assignees. According to the Act on VET, this “sectoral assignees” are given very wide opportunities to influence IVET (see the example below). 17 Sectoral Councils (with some councils covering more fields of study) are to be established by “sectoral assignees”, in cooperation with respective sectoral ministries and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. There were 14 Sectoral Councils established as of April 2010. They are created to serve as advisory bodies to respective “sectoral assignees”.

- Sectoral VET papers (sectoral strategies) stipulated by § 3(4) of the Act on VET are envisaged for discussion during the May meeting of the National VET Council, according to its 2010 work programme;
- There were 7 regional strategies of VET corresponding to § 4(2)a of the Act on VET already submitted for discussion to the National VET Council in March 2010, after discussion at four-partite Regional VET Councils. The strategy of Bratislava Region, elaborated already earlier, is subjected to reviewing as a consequence of political change after elections in November 2009 and submitted to the National VET Council subsequently.
- Papers of 5 “sectoral assignees” offering “plans of labour market needs” (corresponding to the § 5(3)a of the Act on VET) for 13 fields of study were already submitted for discussion to the meeting of National VET Council held in March 2010.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

National, regional, and sectoral levels are affected.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

The new VET governance architecture comprising the establishment of the aforementioned councils is part of a wider reform introduced by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- “Sectoral assignees”:
 - Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
 - Slovak Chamber of Mines;
 - Slovak Chamber of Trades;
 - Slovak Chamber of Agriculture and Food;
 - National Union of Employers;
 - Federation of Employers' Associations;
- 8 self-governing regions;
- State Institute of Vocational Education;
- VET schools.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

It is too soon to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of this policy. Nevertheless, the creation of respective councils has been for a long time under discussion and their absence perceived as a failure within the previous VET governance model.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

The aforementioned councils set and perceived positively by VET experts and practitioners. The aforementioned papers developed in the quality allowing for the appropriate policy agenda setting.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

Integration is an immanent feature of this policy.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

The recent experience clearly shows that there is a lack of data and experience concerning the elaboration of respective papers, in particular plans of labour market needs. There is the risk that the work of councils, in particular of sectoral councils containing employers representatives, will suffer from lacking experience of its members in education related issues and with regard to gathering relevant data.

Rethinking of methodologies to prepare plans of labour market needs is urgently needed, as visible from recent results. Therefore, a specific meeting to find an agreement about the methodology was held on 15th April 2010 and the first proposal of the methodology should be submitted by the Slovak Chamber of Trades and the Association of Automotive Industry for discussion in May 2010.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

It will take time to fully clarify a focus of respective papers, and in particular, to secure collection of valid and reliable data. It is inevitable to work on the standard format of respective papers to avoid plain rhetoric and/or premature proposals based on unreliable data. There is a serious risk that inexperienced employers' representatives will fail in providing the solid background for decision making without specific training, in particular learning from the foreign experience.

It is inevitable to strengthen the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in order to harmonize working on the National System of Qualifications and the National System of Occupations.

It is necessary to avoid the double work in the two aforementioned sectors and to prevent from divergence in activities of experts in

- Sectoral VET Councils established according to the Act on VET;
- sectoral commissions working on description of working positions/occupations within the Trexima ISTP project (see chapter 9.1); a basis of creation of National System of Occupations under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;

- teams of experts expected to work on NSQ according to the Act on LLL.
It could also be rethought how to involve experts from former sectoral expert commissions, affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education, with the experience in curriculum development in the elaboration of respective papers and in participation at discussions about sectoral and regional strategies.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET,
www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/184-2009.pdf
The National VET Council's website, www.radavladayovp.sk

4.4 Promoting workplace learning

Secondary IVET in Slovakia is traditionally school based. In the 1980s workshop premises were built within VET school facilities under the programme of complex centres to offer practical and theoretical education at the same place. Of course, for specific vocational training workplace learning continued to be used. In the 1990s and early 2000s, VET schools faced serious problems in finding business partners for provision of practical training. Students were not trained for particular employer anymore (with marginal exceptions) and employers were less interested in investing in workplace learning of IVET students. It was fully up to skills of VET school director to identify and contract the best possible partner. Some companies are traditionally more open to provision of workplace training (e.g. in the service sector), as the costs of workplace training are covered by earnings.

There is no typical apprenticeship system in Slovakia. All young people, regardless whether they attend grammar school or some VET school, are students (pupils), according to legislation. Even in case of provision of training at the workplace, practical training itself is regulated by the school and follows the education sector legislation. A private firm may establish a private school and/or a workplace of practical training and receive co-financing from the state budget based on the per capita contribution equal to public institution. Nevertheless, enterprises do not consider such approach cost effective.

Promotion of workplace learning have only recently started to emerge as a consequence of a lack of labour force and dissatisfaction of employers with school graduates expected to substitute the qualified labour force previously available from the army of the unemployed. Profitable enterprises facing a lack of labour force, e.g. Volkswagen or U. S. Steel, show a positive attitude towards investment in practical training, regardless whether it is from profit money or in a form of tax deductibles. These large companies also show a positive attitude towards provision of training in their own facilities.

The Act on VET promotes workplace learning (in addition to financial instruments) by the creation of the environment positive towards close cooperation between schools and businesses. For multinationals familiar with the dual system in VET, conditions for controlling practical training were improved to such an extent that the sectoral dual VET system could emerge in the future. Significantly, Volkswagen has established a Centre of Practical Training offering practical training in its premises and partly also at the workplace to students of a cooperating VET school providing for theoretical education only.

In higher education, the cooperation of schools and firms is also in increase. E.g., the cooperation between carmaker Volkswagen Slovakia (VW), a.s., and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava resulted in an agreement to develop the new study programme aimed at the automotive production (see the example of initiative in chapter 6.3) with an enhanced practical approach in theory under the participation of experts from practice and applying work place learning.

There is no reliable data about in company training (in particular SMEs). Nevertheless, continuing vocational training and adult training at the workplace has traditionally occurred. CVTS3 data shows that the share of all employees trained in all enterprises is above the EU27 average (38 % and 33 %, respectively), which is in a huge contrast with a very low figure of LLL participation of adults (3.3 % in 2008, LFS, Eurostat). One explanation is that short-term or daily workplace and on the job learning is not reflected by respondents within the LLL statistical data.

Many activities, although not monitored by the research and not reported for the sake of the Ministry of Education reports as workplace learning (and hidden within general statistics), are performed in enterprises according to the sectoral legislation. Achieving qualification for diverse sectoral professions and working positions is, as a rule, very strictly regulated in Slovakia, resulting in obligatory workplace learning.

Workplace learning is also expected to take place as a consequence of fiscal stimulation. Besides education and training aimed at provision of higher level of education, specific training for the needs of respective enterprises is to be cofinanced by the ESF Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion within Framework Activity 1.2.1 “Promoting the Adaptability of Enterprises, Entrepreneurs, Business Associations and Regions” aimed at skills immediately and directly used in a working process. Intensity of support decreases with the size of enterprises in order to assist SMEs, and handicapped workers are also prioritised. Although this call is not aimed exclusively at workplace training, a high share of it is expected within this measure.

Strengths and weaknesses

After a long period of insufficient interlining of VET with the world of work caused by the huge changes in society and economy in the 1990s, schools and companies face a period of coming together, accelerated by the inclusion into the EU and a stabile growth of economy since then. Legislative changes since 2005 are in support of closer cooperation in IVET (the Education Act and the Act on VET) and in CVET (the Act on LLL).

With regard to IVET the increase in the number of hours of practical training (at least 1 200 within the ISCED 3A double qualification VET programmes mentioned earlier, and at least 1 520 within the ISCED 3C programmes) opens the door for looking for placement of at least parts of practical training into the workplace or specific facilities in enterprises. On the other hand, fiscal stimulation to do so is still not sufficient. Enterprises are eligible for classifying IVET training costs for VET school students as tax deductible only in case this training goes beyond the activities covered by the state budget.

Similarly, there are no tax incentives for CVET/LLL, as all activities of the Ministry of Education were rejected and eliminated from the Act on LLL as endangering the state budget

income and intervening into the freedom of private businesses. Thus, only tax incentives for some categories of medical staff (see Parliament breaks a taboo: tax incentives for lifelong learning In: Cedefop Info 1/2008), supported on request of the Ministry of Health, has remained in place. Although there is no direct workplace learning fiscal stimulation, it is expected that it happens within the active labour market policy measures aimed at training the workers at risk of dismissal, the ESF projects aimed at training of employees, and the training funded within the state aid for new investors. Although the reluctance of the Ministry of Finance to support tax incentives for CVET has a serious economic fundament, huge incentives for investors have been at the same time offered via the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family under the umbrella of state aid aimed at the funding of workplace training in the newly opened plants of strategic investors, within which the efficiency of allocation of means is not monitored.

Validation of prior learning

Validation of learning at the workplace (and also more general non-formal and informal learning) was for a long period not addressed, under the impression that there are enough opportunities to receive qualification within the strong formal VET stream and due to the relatively high level of education of population (e.g. 91.3 % ISCED 3 graduates aged 20-24 in 2007, Eurostat). Furthermore, for people with at least ISCED 3C level of education it was possible to get recognised knowledge, skills and competences acquired in practice in case of some specific qualifications, and even, in some cases it was possible to substitute the required higher level of qualification for respective working positions by the legislatively stipulated number of years of practice. Moreover, Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. opened the door for skilled unqualified people to start respective small business (trade). According to this act and the subsequent decree of the Ministry of Interior No. 323/2001 Coll. specifying the details on required knowledge and skills, examining and certifying, 4 545 out of 4 672 applicants passed exams organised by the Slovak Chamber of Craftsmen in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior regional authority (in the extent corresponding to respective VET study curriculum) during 2001-2009. This kind of exam entitling for receiving a license could also be considered in practice as an instrument for validation of prior learning including workplace learning, although a respective certificate did not recognise attaining respective education in terms of its level and a field of study. This kind of certificate substituted required education (qualification) for business purpose, but not in the full extent of educational legislation (e.g. for the continuation in the next level of formal education or for the employment at VET schools in the position of trainer). Although originally not intended by the Trade Licensing Act, the later amendment allowed for starting a business for persons older than 45, after proving the 10-year practice. Later, also the age barrier was removed.

Thus, there was no massive demand for validation of workplace skills in order to receive the certificate about education and qualification. This does not mean that there were no people without formal qualification in possession of competences meeting qualification requirements. Gradually, validation of prior learning developed into policy agenda with regard to three categories of inhabitants:

- low-skilled Roma inhabitants at risk of social exclusion;
- migrants-returners from abroad with less than 10 years of experience of working in profession without qualification;
- migrants to other branches with the qualification not valid for a new branch of activity.

Act on LLL No. 568/2009 Coll. stipulated for the first time in legislation partial qualifications in order to allow for the gradual acquiring of “full” qualification. Envisaging the fully

operational National System of Qualifications since 1st January 2012, the entitlement to start a business following the examination according to the Trade Licensing Act will be possible till 31st December 2011. This procedure will be later replaced by the certification of partial qualification or “full” qualification obtained according to the Act on LLL (see the example of initiative on validation of non-formal and informal learning in chapter 3.1).

As already explained there is no genuine apprenticeship in Slovakia and there is a long time problem with the quality of practical training. It is also visible from active labour market policy, where a disputable specified tool “Graduate Practice“, stipulated according to § 51 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, is increasingly applied to contribute to the improvement of practical skills (see the example of initiative in part Graduates in chapter 5.1). Nevertheless, the pressure of international experience and transnational firms leads to the gradual changes in IVET. As mentioned above, Volkswagen, a.s., in fact introduced a dual system within IVET training. Many other firms have strengthened cooperation with VET schools in order to secure the inflow of tailor made young professionals, and regions gradually concentrate on supporting the cooperation of schools with important regional employers. The following example is about this kind of cooperation.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Cooperation among local/regional authority, educational institutions and the world of work – the case of Continental, s.r.o., Zvolen</p> <p>The policy has been implemented since 2006.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)</p> <p>During a meeting of employers and VET schools establisher in Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region a need for closer cooperation of employers and VET schools have been intensively mentioned. Cooperation should not focus on graduates training – qualified labour force only, but it should also address cooperation in innovations of study specialisations and conditions for practical training of VET schools students. One of the employers, Continental Automotive Systems, s.r.o., Zvolen, has clearly declared the needs to have employees, whose qualification is matching European standard. It has also declared its willingness to actively participate in such training.</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>During the first negotiations the following specific aims have been agreed upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a new competence profile of the studies in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering so that knowledge and skills of a graduate are matching the level of a graduate from the same specialisation in Germany and the Netherlands; - develop a system of practical training of students from the Secondary Technical School in Zvolen in the company Continental Automotive Systems, s.r.o., Zvolen; - identify the VET study branches the school does not have material conditions for; Continental Automotive Systems may fill in this gap with specialised classrooms.

(c) Target groups

- Secondary VET students of Secondary Technical School in Zvolen;
- Teachers of specialised subjects at Secondary Technical School;
- Parents.

(d) Status of implementation

Project was planned to run 3 years. Project piloting was completed in June 2008 with corrections being adopted; this process resulted in extending this project to another school – Joined School Detva.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

It is an example of regional policy in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training/employment/social policy approach?

This approach is matching the VET development strategy of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region and it has been approved by its members of regional parliament in 2006. Partial outputs of the project have been reflected in the documents that are under preparation: Regional innovation strategy of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region (2008) and the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region development programme (2008) for VET on ISCED 3A and 3C levels.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Continental Automotive Systems, s.r.o.;
- Secondary Technical School Zvolen;
- Regional self-governing authority: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region – Department of Lifelong Learning.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

- Curricula have been adjusted according to employers' needs;
- In the 2006/2007 school year, 37 students of two specialisations carried out their practical training in Continental;
- In 2007 specialised classrooms for teaching automation and hydraulics have been set up in Continental premises;
- A coordinated approach of the school and Continental as for addressing basic school leavers and their parents has been applied since the 2007/2008 school year;
- Conditions for extended cooperation have been achieved, recently partly hampered by the crisis.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

All graduates from mechanical engineering and electrical engineering braches, who expressed their interest to work in Continental, have been admitted. This decreased the unemployment rate of graduates.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

Dissemination of project results is expected also into other regions and sectors, however, currently it is important to stabilise the project achievements, due to the crisis and unclear impact of the crisis on the regional labour market.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Negative sentiment of parents rising from recent times when mechanical engineering production has been drastically reduced and demand for work force in this sector was minimal, has been overcome. It is important to prevent from return of frustration under the current crisis and to stress visions for after crisis conditions.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Elaborate and implement a system of lifelong career guidance and counselling focusing on this field with the stabilised flow of quality information.

5. Source, legend

Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Department of Lifelong Learning,
www.vucbb.sk/ganet/vuc/bb/portal.nsf/pages/C50321C493BB4F5EC1256F43002CE7AE

5. Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship

5.1 Addressing equity in VET

Policy progress in improving equity in VET

The secondary education system in Slovakia is dominantly VET focused in both the number of programmes and the number of VET students. In 2009, the VET stream contained 72 % of newly enrolled in VET schools (decreasing from 84 % in 1989 at the beginning of the transformation).

Slovakia, however, still belongs to the EU countries with the strongest VET stream. It represents 74 % ISCED 3 VET students (73 % if just full-time students are calculated) of all secondary students compared to 51 % in EU27, according to the UOE 2006 data.

The increasing enrolment in general education reflects the crisis of VET in the 1990s, with the labour market not much interested in VET graduates, and relatively higher enrolment capacities in grammar schools due to the decline of population. In Slovakia, VET has not been the second best choice to general education. Offering academic subjects as well as VET, ISCED 3A studies at VET schools also offered a straight way to higher education, in particular to technical universities. Two-year follow-up ISCED 3A studies entitled also ISCED 3C VET graduates for admission tests for higher education. Although the data above indicates an increase of interest in general education, it is definitely not due to lacking opportunities to achieve higher education after enrolment in the VET stream.

Improving equity was not seen as an issue in Slovakia, with two exceptions: the ethnic Roma population, in particular that living in segregated settlements and Hungarian minority students. While the former exception represents a serious problem with the huge economic shortcomings, the latter is rather of political fabric. The Hungarian minority is served by the network of Hungarian speaking institutions starting with kindergartens and finishing with the university, and relevant debates are about the width of provision of secondary VET with Hungarian as a language of instruction on the one hand, and of the Slovak language acquisition important for assertion in the Slovak speaking labour market by graduates from Hungarian speaking schools on the other hand.

In contrast, Roma, and in particular those living in the segregated settlements, can be seen as discriminated. The disproportion in the level of education in comparison with other inhabitants is, however, not just a result of lacking knowledge of the language of instruction (Slovak or Hungarian), or the poverty in families, but also of a difference in culture (see the subchapter on Roma below).

There are wide opportunities for all inhabitants in Slovakia to enter IVET corresponding to individual preferences due to the surplus of capacities in secondary schools as a result of the population decline. The poverty in families itself should not hamper youngsters in their access to secondary education, as there is the system of scholarships for socially disadvantaged students introduced (see the example below). The problem is in primary education and in the quality of outcomes. The disproportionally high attendance of Roma in primary schools for mentally challenged population is not just a result of ill practice in pre-selection of 5 years old population entering primary schools, but also of the inability of some

families to provide their children with skills tested by the school maturity test. These tests originally causing the misplacement of Roma children not featuring a mental sub-normality to schools for such a category of students (due to not stimulating background in the family and a weak acquirement of skills important at the beginning of schooling) were replaced by culturally sensitive tests elaborated by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology able to indicate just temporary lagging behind the mainstream. Nevertheless, changes in the provision of education that would better match Roma minority needs is inevitable. Without the enrolment of Roma in kindergartens, a mainstream primary school cannot be seen as suitable for Roma sticking to the different cultural patterns. The provision of multicultural education within primary schools and/or a variety of approaches adjusted to individual needs of students is often advocated, however, without a clear implementation proposal. It must be considered unrealistic under the current conditions of ignoring the need for higher investment in human resources by the country leading economists (as also visible from a long-time low share of investment in education in GDP far below the EU average).

A high risk of the Matthew effect (better educated are better served by additional training) is assumed in CVET and training for the unemployed. The low-skilled are often reluctant to participate in labour market training, and in particular, unemployed Roma feature disproportionally low participation in training. The same as mentioned about IVET also applies for continuing training targeting Roma. Culturally not sensitive continuing training (including efforts to apply the second chance school practice from abroad) proves inefficient as continuing training perpetuates failing patterns of initial education. IVET and CVET is designed for majority learners rather than for Roma. Regardless of the pedagogy of instruction that must be inevitably changed, the most vulnerable point from the Roma culture point of view is just focusing on the increase of employability instead of offering training linked to employment, with a working position conditioned by successful completion of training.

Equity can be seen as an urgent agenda in terms of treatment and outcomes rather than in terms of opportunities and access. The importance of provision of equal access to education is for long years well recognised and the policy progress, already indicated above, can be explicitly highlighted by the following:

- In 2004, J. Selye University in Komárno was established offering higher education in the Hungarian language;
- School maturity tests applied before entering primary education and seen as discriminating Roma were replaced by culturally sensitive testing;
- Students from the disadvantaged Roma families are encouraged for better school performance by specific motivation scholarships (see the example below);
- Handicapped students are better served by higher education institutions as a consequence of more efficient supporting services (coordinators assigned at all faculties to assist handicapped students and to remove barriers of the access to the provision of learning).

The equal treatment of all inhabitants is guaranteed by legislation, inter alia stressed by the Antidiscrimination Act No. 365/2004 Coll. Nevertheless, unequal treatment in practice might occur due to the complexity of the problem, and a lack of both resources and experience. The typical examples are as follows:

- It is impossible to deliver education in the Roma language of instruction due to the lack of teachers with the Roma language proficiency and a lacking supply of qualified teachers and trainers of Roma origin. Assisting the teachers who do not speak the Roma language

by the Roma assistants contributed to improvement, however, just partial, and it can hardly be expanded to the needed extent.

- Despite increasing efforts to prevent physically handicapped children from segregation from the mainstream and a stronger influence of advocates of integration and inclusion policies in all types and levels of education, the integration/inclusion in practice is hampered by the inexperience of pedagogical staff of mainstream schools to work with them and the insufficient investment in improving conditions for mainstream schools to adjust to students with special needs in both the professional staff and environment. As a consequence, from the pragmatists' point of view a strong stream of special schools serving children with special needs is considered a better solution than the inclusion efforts under inappropriate conditions.

Strengths and weaknesses

There is a very solid provision of opportunities to acquire vocational competences due to a wide provision of specific IVET study and training branches. Furthermore, there are no substantial obstacles to achieve higher education for those who decide for secondary VET programme after finishing basic school. General education offered within VET ISCED 3A programmes has been traditionally stressed to create conditions for further individual learning and for the development of skills going beyond respective professions in order to prevent from reduced training purely focusing on respective working skills. The 2008 state educational programmes designed by the State Institute of Vocational Education describing the framework for VET school autonomous curricula were developed in cooperation with the experts in general education from the National Institute for Education.

Nevertheless, there is a very disappointing trend of decline in performance of students in domains important also for VET, visible from international measurements (PISA, TIMSS). In all domains (Science, Reading, Mathematics) measured within PISA 2006 Slovakia scored significantly below the OECD average deteriorating from the average performance in Mathematics and Science in 2003 and confirming the below average position in Readings, deteriorating significantly (the increase by 5 percentage points to 15.6 % in 2006 compared to 2003) in the number of boys with the poorest performance (below Level 1 of PISA scaling). Furthermore, the influence of socioeconomic contexts on learning outcomes (in 2006 studied in Science performance) has been again confirmed. Slovakia belonged to the countries where socioeconomic differences among students contributed the most to the between-school variance. Thus, policy interventions aimed at reducing the influence of socioeconomic contexts on learning outcomes are very urgent, not just because of the need to address equity but also to prevent from the losses caused by the failure of education system to capitalise on the potential of students from the disadvantaged families.

Slovakia unfortunately decided not to participate at PISA 2000 and therefore the fall in performance can be documented by the TIMSS results. A gradual decrease of performance of 8th grade students of basic schools (aged 14/15) in Mathematics is clearly visible from the dramatic fall from 3rd place (with scale score 534) among European countries in 1995 according to TIMSS. Slovakia kept its standard with the identical score 534 in 1999, but deteriorated significantly down to 508 in 2003. Similarly, Slovakia deteriorated significantly in Science, going down from 532 in 1995 and 535 in 1999 to 517 in 2003. Poor results were also confirmed by the performance below the average of 10-year old children in 2007 TIMSS testing in Mathematics. All this indicates serious problems for the future and also for the quality of VET graduates as VET students performed traditional lower than the general education stream in the aforementioned domains. The above-average impact of

socioeconomic background on student performance within the OECD countries is documented by PISA, thus the failure of the education system to compensate the disadvantage coming from family conditions, represents a specific challenge for VET schools, as VET schools have been traditionally more preferred by poor families seeking for their children a shorter way to qualification and entering labour market.

Long years of underestimating the urgency of curricular reform ended in 2008 by the stormy legislative change aimed at reducing the obligatory content of education and increasing autonomy of schools in designing their curricula. Nevertheless, PISA and TIMSS lessons seem to be insufficiently reflected. Furthermore, the stress on the development of personal skills and humanities over traditionally overstressed mathematics and natural sciences as well as an insufficient debate on fundamentals of implementation of changes might endanger the competitiveness of future VET professionals. The introduction of obligatory education of two foreign languages, usually English and German or French without the supply of quality teachers is one of the controversially seen examples. Although it might be seen as a fulfilment of the EU goal for its inhabitants to communicate in two European languages and a response to the suggestion of 2002 Barcelona European Council, it might lead to controversial results, in particular within ISCED 3C programmes. Significantly, formal secondary education is overemphasized with regard to this and mighty opportunities of non-formal and informal learning underestimated with regard to acquiring foreign languages.

Years of ignorance of education needs by decision makers are visible from the underfinancing of the education sector as a whole (3.62 % of GDP compared to 4.96 % in EU27 in 2007, according to Eurostat harmonised data on public expenditure in education) and insufficient remuneration of educators in particular, translating into the decreasing interest of young people in serving as teachers and trainers. All governments have failed to take an effective measure to fight the natural brain drain of experienced teachers and trainers as well as student teachers to businesses, as well as to adopt measures making teaching and training attractive for promising young professionals. Although financing schools per capita contributed to the provision of programmes required by students, at the same time it contributed to the decrease of the quality of graduates under the condition of rather superficial monitoring of quality, subordinated to the ultimate policy priority - reducing costs of education. The future risks of discrimination in provision of quality learning opportunities are best visible from a very huge migration of Slovak students looking for quality tertiary education abroad. About 20 000 students were accepted by Czech higher education institutions, not speaking about other countries, which compares to the size of the largest Slovak university (Comenius University had 19 141 students in full-time programmes as of 31st October 2009). In contrast, there were just 539 Czech students studying in Slovakia. Although the large amount of Slovak students studying abroad is seen positively, the students' will to return to Slovakia is weakened by the low provision of quality working positions in the Slovak economy focused on the assembly industry rather than on the knowledge-based economy, with underdeveloped research and development opportunities. Slovakia's investment in research and development has been for long years among the lowest in OECD and EU. Slovakia even moves in opposite to the 2010 Lisbon goal of 3 % GDP in research and development investment, decreasing from 0.65 % GDP in 2000 to 0.49 % GDP, far below 1.84 % of EU27 in 2006, according to the Eurostat newest harmonised data.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Scholarships for students of secondary schools, vocational schools and practical schools whose parents are in material need or below subsistence minimum

Scholarships have been provided since 1st June 2004, with new terms for awarding scholarships since 1st September 2008.

The policy was originally implemented within the national ESF SOP Human Resources project "Provision of scholarships to secondary school students whose parents are dependent on benefits in material need" (1st June 2004 – 31st January 2006) aimed at students from all regions except the Bratislava Region. Scholarships for students from the Bratislava Region were paid from the state budget. After project's closing the policy continues with scholarships covered from the state budget for students from all regions.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

The main idea behind the project is to improve the access of students from socially disadvantaged families to education. The scholarships are intended to cover at least part of costs for education of these students to enable them to acquire secondary education. The costs include e.g. travel costs, food, accommodation, learning aids, etc.

Slovakia still features a high unemployment of young people. The low level of education is still a big barrier to their employment.

The provision of scholarships improves the access to education for students of secondary schools, as well as students of vocational schools and practical schools (the latter two within the system of schools for special educational needs students) whose parents are in a material need.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

The main aim of the measure is to improve the access of targeted students to education. Specific objectives are as follows:

- Increasing a share of students from families in a material need or families with incomes below subsistence minimum in education;
- Making students more involved in their education, in accordance with § 149 of Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.;
- Increasing motivation of students from families in a material need or families with incomes below subsistence minimum to participate at education;
- Increasing the effectiveness and quality of education.

(c) Target groups

Students whose parents depend on benefits in a material need. In 2007 conditions were expanded to children from families living below a subsistence minimum, based on the amendment No. 343/2006 Coll. of the decree on provision of scholarships.

Since September 2008, the provision of scholarships is regulated by a new legislative norm, namely by § 149 of Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The ESF project was launched in June 2004 and closed in June 2006. Provision of benefits was conditioned by making a contract between a school and the assigned department of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, setting conditions for provision of financial means. The payments were made to respective schools through the Institute. The last benefits within the project were paid for January 2006.

The scholarships covered meal, accommodation and travel expenses. The amount depended on student's educational achievements, which made students more involved in achieving better results.

Based on positive experience the implementation of the measure has been prolonged under the same conditions with scholarships paid from the state budget.

Currently, the scholarships are provided in accordance with § 149 of the Education Act. In contrast to a previous legislative norm, the guidelines for provision scholarships have been changed. The scholarship cannot be awarded to a student with the average mark over 3.5 in the previous school year (of 5-mark scale with 1 the best and 5 the worse), and the scholarship amount is set by a certain percentage of subsistence minimum of dependent child (EUR 84.52 as of 1st July 2009; the amount of subsistence minimum is adjusted on yearly basis, according to § 5 of the Act No. 601/2003 Coll. on Subsistence Minimum).

For the 2009/2010 school year the scholarship monthly amounts were set as follows:

- Students with average mark up to 2.0 receive 50 % of subsistence minimum, i.e. EUR 42.26;
- Students with average mark over 2.0 up to 2.5 receive 35 % of subsistence minimum, i.e. EUR 29.59;
- Students with average mark over 2.5 up to 3.5 receive 25 % of subsistence minimum, i.e. EUR 21.13.

No changes have been made in assessment of social situation of scholarship applicants.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The original project was implemented within the ESF SOP Human Resources, Priority 3 "Increasing the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees and Persons Entering the Labour Market", Measure 3.1 "Adaptation of Vocational Training and Education to the Needs of the Knowledge-Based Society". The aim of the project was in concord with the EQUAL initiative Priority Theme 1 "Facilitating Access and Return to the Labour Market for Those who Have Difficulty in Being Integrated and Re-integrated into Labour Market" and its Measure 1 "Creating a System Supporting the Introduction of Long-Term Unemployed, Low-Skilled and Other Disadvantaged Groups into the Labour Market". Moreover, the measure is also included within the National Reform Programme approved by the government on 12th October 2005, within the priority focused on access to education for children from risk and marginalised groups through inclusive policies in education and training "through programmes of financial support, such as contributions and subsidies for support of access to education".

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure)

- Schools; they administer and approve applications for scholarships. They assess entitlement of students to receiving benefits, assign the amount of benefits as stipulated by the Ministry of Education, and submit lists of students, including amount of benefits to the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education;
- The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education; it reviews requests for benefit payments submitted by schools, prepares supportive documents for contracts and contract supplements made with schools, provides schools with financial means, checks whether benefits were paid to students by schools correctly, provides methodological guidance to schools in specific cases of assessing entitlement for receiving benefits, and monitors the process of benefits provision.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available)

The statistical data collected and processed by the respective department of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education has confirmed an increase in average amount of benefit from SKK 902 in 2004 to SKK 922 in 2008. In 2009 the average amount was EUR 31.47 (Exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 30.126). The total amount paid was EUR 2 834 371. In 2009, the lowest average benefit of EUR 30.22 was in secondary specialised schools, the highest of EUR 35.63 in 4-year grammar schools. The number of scholarships paid to students of secondary specialised schools represented 64.3 % of all paid scholarships.

Furthermore, a survey carried out on a sample of students receiving benefits shows improved performance of students. Significantly better arithmetical means from marks were observed. During the implementation of this measure school directors have gradually started to apply more largely their powers concerning the scholarships given by legislation. In particular, they have conditioned the scholarship award by school attendance and fulfilment of study duties. As a result, the school attendance of the students receiving scholarships has improved, which in many cases resulted in their better performance at school. The effectiveness of education has significantly improved predominantly in regions featuring the highest unemployment. In these regions the share of scholarship recipients among students was significantly higher compared to other regions.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

The indicators of success were set within the ESF project:

Final indicators:

- Number of students receiving scholarships: 12 258;
- Number of monthly benefits paid: 187 830;
- Number of students receiving scholarships who complete secondary education: 3 107;
- Share of students achieving better results in education after receiving scholarships: 19 %.

The total amount of eligible expenditures within the ESF project was SKK 86 047 173.05 (SKK 64 535 379.59 from ESF sources and SKK 21 511 793.46 from the state budget).

Currently it is estimated that 25 % of scholarship recipients complete secondary school in the respective school year. A survey carried out on a sample of students of secondary specialised schools receiving benefits shows that a minimum of 99 % of them complete their education. The share of students achieving better results in education after receiving scholarships is

about 20 %.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

Positive results led to expansion of the policy originally targeted on students whose parents depend on benefits in material need to students from families living below a subsistence minimum.

Furthermore, some regions started to provide for regional scholarships funded from their own budgets to refine targeting students, and to additionally increase benefits for some categories of students.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

- Promotion of scholarships by regular means was found insufficient and therefore a specific action was taken. Calendars were disseminated to all secondary schools containing information how to take an action.
- Some regions and some establishers of private schools intervened inappropriately insisting on transfer financial means to their budgets instead of transferring them directly to account of respective schools. The problem was fixed by the requirement of the Institute to submit school's individual bank account.
- Administration of payment requests and financial statements were administratively very demanding; newly introduced mechanism is time saving and schools are positive toward the change.
- Unreliability of data from respective students caused additional administrative burden related to enforcement of paying back the unjustified benefits. This problem featuring predominantly in eastern and south-eastern Slovakia is hard to address, as it requires permanent means-testing.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

It is very demanding for schools to check whether students remain entitled to scholarship due to their social status. It is necessary to find a way how to cooperate with officials of social departments, which is conditioned by agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In such a way school would be responsible for checking entitlement related to quality of educational performance only.

5. Source, legend

Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.,

www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/245_2008.pdf

Act No. 601/2003 Coll. on Subsistence Minimum

www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=706

Policy progress focused on improving equity for groups at risk

A profile of groups at risk in Slovakia results from the specificity of the education system and transition from command economy to market economy. As the Slovak education system has a very strong VET component and traditionally very high participation rates in upper

secondary education, it features low rates in early school leavers and low skilled individuals. This, however, does not apply for the Roma minority, which in contrast with majority nations (predominantly Slovaks and Hungarians) is very vulnerable exactly due to early school leaving and not acquiring higher level skills, not speaking about qualifications needed at the labour market. Apparently, the Slovak education system is not able to respond to specific learning needs of Roma and to reflect the different culture of non-integrated Roma inhabitants to the majority population society (see the subchapter on Roma below).

The Slovak education system has a specific stream of schools serving students with special educational needs. Although integration and inclusion policies are much more pronounced after 1989, a stream of these schools has remained preserved. It is believed that a specific environment at these schools with specially trained staff graduating from special education programmes at universities can better serve students with special needs and a criticism of segregation is flatly rejected by advocates of special schools. Furthermore, integration and inclusion plans are permanently hampered by a lack of flexibility of mainstream schools suffering from a lack of funding to adjust the environment to special student needs.

Besides the people outside mainstream education, the following are the groups disadvantaged on the labour market:

- secondary school graduates that are often not able to compete with currently unemployed older experienced workers;
- elderly people that are often not able to renew their skills and/or are less attractive for employers due to the suspected lower productivity.

A specific group at risk is the long-term unemployed, usually featuring more characteristics making them vulnerable for assertion in the labour market: low skills, older age, Roma ethnicity, in particular families with a long history of unemployment and health handicap. Not surprisingly, a category of long-term unemployed is the most resistant to improvement, as visible from statistical data and monitoring of the efficiency of adopted policies.

Slovakia has adopted the priorities of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 considering their fulfilment as the basic precondition for increasing competitiveness of the economy. The Competitiveness Strategy for the Slovak Republic until 2010: the National Lisbon Strategy was adopted by the Government Resolution No. 140/2005 on 16th February 2005 and four Action Plans corresponding to four areas: Information society; Science, R&D and innovations; Education and employment; Business environment; were subsequently approved by the Government Resolution No. 557/2005 of 13th July 2005. Subsequently, the most coherent policy paper, the National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic 2006–2008, reflecting both the aforementioned Competitiveness Strategy and the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs of the EU economic policy, was adopted by the Government Resolution No. 797/2005 of 12th October 2005.

The policy paper of the new government, the Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 was adopted by the government on 4th June 2008 complemented by Action Plans added in October 2008. These Action Plans are linked with the National Reform Programme of the SR for 2008-2010, approved by the Government Resolution No. 707/2008 of 8th October 2008.

The NRP presents policies to address groups at risk within chapters 1. Implementation of the Lisbon measures in the previous year (parts 1.1 Education and 1.3 Employment) and 3. Reform measures for 2008-2010 (parts 3.3 Education and 3.4. Employment).

Short-term and medium-term measures identified within the Action Plans Education and Employment are interlinked with the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion and Operational Programme Education, approved in October and November 2007, respectively.

Early school-leavers and low-skilled people

Slovakia has traditionally a high share of secondary educated population and low shares of high and low educated. A further shift towards higher level of education is visible from the following table. There is a comparably low share of low level educated people (about 10 % compared to almost 30 % in EU27). The serious weakness is an insufficient amount of people with higher education rather than an insufficient amount of qualified people, as a dominant share of ISCED 3-4 educated people graduated from VET.

Table 5.1: Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 (%) in 2000 and 2008

	Educational attainment 2000			Educational attainment 2008		
	Low ISCED 0-2	Medium ISCED 3-4	High ISCED 5-6	Low ISCED 0-2	Medium ISCED 3-4	High ISCED 5-6
EU27	35.6	44.9	19.5	28.5	47.2	24.3
Slovakia	16.2	73.5	10.3	10.1	75.2	14.8

Source: Eurostat (LFS)

Slovakia is among the EU countries with the lowest number of drop-outs and early school leavers. Females' figures are better than those of males. In 2008, the percentage of females aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in education or training was 4.9 % in contrast to 7.9 % of males, both significantly below EU27 data as well as the 2010 benchmark of 10 %.

Although youth education attainment level is among the best in Europe, with 92.3 % of the population aged 20-24 having completed at least upper secondary education (in contrast to 78.5 % in EU27) in 2008, a downward trend is visible e.g. in comparison with 94.8 % in 2000. Nevertheless, statistics would be different for the Roma ethnic minority; in particular the Roma population living in segregated settlements. Measures to fight early school leaving are to a large extent in coincidence with measures to fight early school leaving of children from socially disadvantaged families, of which a dominant share consist of Roma families (see the part on Roma below). Motivation scholarships were introduced to motivate children from disadvantaged poor families to complete education (see the example above).

A new Education Act in force since 2008 set a positive change with refining the qualification (education level) framework introducing inter alia a lower secondary vocational education level. Thus, students who left a 9-year basic school without completing lower secondary (general) education even after repeating classes are now given a chance to complete lower secondary vocational education by completing 2 or 3 year lasting ISCED 2C "training for simple and auxiliary working". These programmes were originally aimed at retaining young people in education and training in order to enable them to obtain at least some competences. In contrast to graduates from a former programme with unclear status, they are now clearly embedded in the system. This will not affect the early school leaving statistics, it however opens the window for receiving a formal qualification and it might help these graduates to assert easier into the labour market.

There are also specific programmes organised within active labour market policies. The objective of the “second chance schools” programme was to bring the adults without completed lower secondary education back to school and assist them in completing basic school (and obtain a lower secondary education level certificate). Although “second chance schools” are well-known programmes from other countries, they have not proved successful in Slovakia so far. Moreover, ISCED 2 general level education is very low for successful assertion in the labour market in Slovakia. The employment rate of 25 to 64 aged Slovak inhabitants with ISCED 0-2 level of education is the lowest among the EU countries with 15.9 % in 2008 compared to 48.1 % in EU27. Apparently, a combination of practical training for simple jobs, with incentives making working pay substantially more than relying on social benefits, has better chances to lead to higher employment of this segment of the unemployed.

The percentage of people aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education not in education was 6.0 % in 2008 compared to 14.9 % in EU27 and there were 83.2 % of 18-year-olds in education in 2007 compared to 76.5 % in EU27, all data according to Eurostat. This kind of data does not force authorities to an urgent action. Moreover, there is a high coincidence between early school-leavers, low-skilled and the inhabitants of Roma origin living in settlements with a low standard infrastructure. Thus, relevant measures are dominantly targeted on Roma. Nevertheless, prevention is considered the best policy concerning early school-leavers and low-skilled people. Motivation scholarships presented in detail in this chapter above is such an example.

Older workers

Ageing in coincidence with the dramatic birth rates decline in the 1990s is posing a serious threat to the country’s future. The unfavourable demographical development increases the importance of interventions to raise the employment of elderly people. Low employment rates in comparison to EU are caused by an earlier retirement age, but also by the lower employability of elderly people, as also visible from the extremely high long-term unemployment ratio, which was the highest among EU27 countries in 2005-2008.

Table 5.2: Employment rate and unemployment rate of 55-64 aged in 2001-2009 (%)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 3Q
Employment rate	22.4	22.1	24.6	26.0	30.3	33.1	35.6	39.2	40.2
Unemployment rate	11.7	16.6	12.6	16.1	13.4	9.8	8.2	6.4	7.5
Long-term unemployment ratio	57.4	61.6	68.9	66.4	80.7	84.2	85.0	80.7	55.6

Source: Eurostat

The increase in employment was caused by the strong economic growth accompanied by a vivid creation of new jobs and by gradual increase of the retirement age. A huge drop in the long-term unemployment ratio indicated in 2009, and visible in a lesser extent also EU-wide, is caused by the crisis rather than by successful interventions, as it is influenced by the inflow of newly dismissed elderly people. The following table indicates the statement above.

Table 5.3: Employed and unemployed of 55-64 aged in 2008 and 2009 (in thousands)

	2008 3Q	2009 3Q
Employed	249. 6	256. 8
Unemployed	14. 6	20. 7

Source: Eurostat

Nevertheless, employment services focused on elderly people were introduced after the reform in 2004. The unemployed elderly people aged 50+ are indicated as a group at risk by § 8(1)b of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, and active labour market policies must be prepared to serve them.

Active labour market measures to support employment of older workers comprise the provision of guidance services and elaboration of individual action plans to support their assertion in the labour market, the acquisition of practical experience and working habits at employer's workplace, the provision of financial subsidies to employers to support creation of jobs for disadvantaged job seekers, and the financial contribution to employers who employ an older job seeker who completed labour market training provided for by public employment services.

A survey on active ageing, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and carried out by the Institute for Labour and Family Research, has disclosed that employers understand the need for training of elderly workers a key prerequisite for their retaining in working process. At the same time, however, many employers consider the investment made in improving skills of elderly workers inefficient and prefer younger employees, when selecting participants for such programmes. Furthermore, the elderly unemployed also consider lacking skills, in particular language and ICT competences, the main obstacles of their placement in the labour market. At the same time, however, a considerable part of elderly unemployed is sceptical concerning participation in training and does not see it as the way to employment. This can also explain a low participation of elderly persons in the labour market training programmes. Only 2.7 % persons aged 50-64 participated in such programmes in 2007, according to this report. Only a slight improvement was visible during the crisis time due to the cofinancing from the ESF: In the second quarter of 2009, there were 52 100 unemployed aged 50-64, according to Eurostat, while 1 836 of this age group (3.5 %) participated in labour market training, according to the data of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Contribution to support employment of job seekers completing labour market training

The measure was introduced within the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, in force since 1st May 2008. The financial contribution has been provided to employers to employ older job seekers.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

Despite a rising trend Slovakia still features a low employment rate of older workers compared to EU27 average (39.2 % and 45.6 %, respectively, in 2008) and it lags behind the Lisbon objective by 10.8 percentage points. One of the barriers older workers face in their access to the labour market is the mismatch between the already acquired professional knowledge and skills and the labour market needs. Increasing their employability through labour market training programmes is a key prerequisite for increasing their employment. These programmes provide older workers with the possibility to complement and update their knowledge and skills and to acquire knowledge and skills meeting employers'

requirements.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The main aim of the measure is to support employment of older workers and stimulate employers to employ people from this group at risk. The measure covers the financial contribution provided to the employer that employs a job seeker who is over 50 years old and completed labour market training. The provision of contribution is differentiated regionally with 25 % of total labour costs calculated from monthly national average wage in the Bratislava Region and 35 % in other regions. A maximum period for provision of the contribution is 24 months.

(c) Target groups

Job seekers aged over 50 being registered with the registry for at least 3 months and having completed labour market training. The training completed by older job seeker should last at least 6 months and a maximum of 24 months. Labour market training programmes provided for by employment services are considered as continuing training programmes.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The measure is part of active labour market measures. A short experience of its implementation since 1st May 2008 indicates a low interest of employers in employment of older workers. According to the data of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family job seekers aged over 50 represented 34 % of all participants at labour market training in 2008. Despite a high number of older trainees in these programmes employers showed a low interest in their subsequent employment. The reasons could include a mismatch between the focus of labour market training programmes and specific employers' needs, prejudices and stereotype patterns in employers' attitudes towards older workers, and to some extent also the global economic crisis.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The measure is part of active labour market measures focused on both increasing the employability of groups at risk at the labour market and their social inclusion.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Labour market training providers.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The measure was launched in the second half of 2008, it means in time of the economic growth and job creation decline and on the onset of the global economic crisis. As quantitative data concerning results of this measure are missing it is not possible to assess its efficiency, including the dead weight effects, substitution and shift.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

Standard indicators of success in measures focused on support of job creation for groups at risk on the labour market cover a number of jobs created by employers and a number of job seekers placed in these jobs. In this case, however, the data are missing. It is supposed that the interest in this measure will increase after labour market stabilisation.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The measure is part of the labour market policy and its main aim was to increase the employment of older workers to meet targets set by the Lisbon strategy concerning employment of older workers (50 % employment rate). Labour market policy is closely linked to regional employment policies, which are part of regional development plans developed by self-government regions.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

The measure was launched in time of in coming crisis and the decline in job creation at all. These reasons can be considered the main obstacles for implementation of this measure.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The main challenge in the implementation of this measure covers the better coordination in the focus of labour market training courses attended by older workers with current employers' qualification needs. Completing the targeted training programmes will facilitate the older worker access to the open labour market and it will significantly increase the efficiency of this measure.

5. Source, legend

Realizácia nástrojov aktívnej politiky trhu práce za rok 2008 [Implementation of active labour market policy tools in 2008]. Internal document of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Bratislava: ÚPSVAR, 2009.

Statistics on ALMP tools www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-tp-statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-trhu-prace-2009.html?page_id=1251

Migrants

Migration was not a topic of public policy till the country's accession into EU in 2004. Labour migration increased after the accession fuelled by the political integration, but also by the economic growth. Labour emigration into better paying EU countries has been accompanied with increasing labour immigration with similar characteristics: There are global migrants filling gaps in the Slovak labour market corresponding to their qualification, and there are pure economic migrants looking just for better remuneration than in homeland, regardless of the position available on the market. The distribution is 80 %/20 % according to the survey conducted in mid 2009 by the Faculty of Social and Economic Science of Comenius University. A different picture is offered when detailing the first group. It is composed of low skilled migrants hoping predominantly in better remuneration in worker positions (30 %) and high skilled migrants (50 %) looking for opportunities on the Slovak labour market and matching requirements in a higher end of working positions. Employers expressed satisfaction with migrants indicating their positive rather than negative experience, stressing a shortage in language command among dominant problems. Similarly, migrants from high end positions are negatively surprised by a low level of knowledge of English in mainstream population hampering their contact to the society, and low skilled migrants also indicate lacking knowledge of Slovak language a barrier for further progress. Thus, any kind of vocational education and training of migrants is dominantly a matter of language of instruction. About 16 % of migrants indicated their interest in receiving Slovak citizenship, according to the aforementioned survey.

Significantly, the most important education activities for asylum seekers are aimed at acquiring language. Language is seen as a precondition for further integration into the majority society as well as assertion into the labour market.

Employment of foreigners is regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. According to the Act, the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family maintains the registry of foreigners employed in Slovakia and publishes monthly statistics since 2008. An overall picture about numbers of migrants is offered in the following tables.

Table 5.4: Number of foreigners employed in Slovakia

	June 2008	December 2008	June 2009	December 2009
Number of foreigners	12 806	13 979	15 360	15 264

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Amounts of foreign migrants are far from replacement of labour emigrants from Slovakia that jumped after accession to EU in 2004 from 78 400 in 2002 to about 177 200 in the top of boom in EU economies, dropping to 129 000 in 2009 due to the crisis.

Table 5.5: Slovak citizens working abroad 2004-2009 (annual average in thousands)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Employed total	2 127.0	2 164.6	2 170.4	2 216.2	2 301.4	2 357.3	2 433.8	2 365.8
Working abroad-Male	55.4	48.5	71.1	85.5	104.5	119.3	122.0	92.8
Working abroad-Female	23.0	20.8	32.5	39.9	53.6	57.9	45.6	36.3
Working abroad-Total	78.4	69.3	103.6	125.4	158.1	177.2	167.6	129.0
Working abroad (%)	3.7	3.2	4.8	5.7	6.9	7.5	6.9	5.5

Source: Statistical Office, LFS

Similarly, asylum seekers represent, comparably to other EU countries, a minor group of people. Slovakia is not an interesting country for application for citizenship, as also clearly visible from the following table.

Table 5.6: Number of asylum applications in 1996-2007

	1996	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of foreigners	415	1 555	8 150	9 745	10 300	11 395	3 550	2 850	2 640

Source: Eurostat

A preliminary increase in applications visible in the early 2000s is related to the increase of attractiveness of Slovakia as a pre-accession country offering a bridge to richer EU countries. The real attractiveness of Slovakia for people from non-EU countries is visible from recent data. Furthermore, Slovakia seems to be quite reluctant in granting citizenships.

Although foreigners who were granted asylum are indicated as a group at risk by § 8(1)j of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, and therefore subject of special care by employment services, no specific VET related policies are indicated. As already mentioned, language training is the main tool for facilitation of their assertion into the labour market.

Learners with special needs

People with disabilities feature extremely low rate of economic activity, with high unemployment rate and low employment rate, as e.g. demonstrated on the 2008 data below.

Table 5.7: Labour market indicators of disabled people in 2008

	Number	Rate (%)
Total population	261 000	100
Employed	22 800	8.74
Unemployed	6 000	20.7
Active	28 800	11.03

Source: Statistical Office, LFS

Increasing employability and employment of disabled persons is targeted by active labour market policy due to indication of disabled citizens as a group at risk by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, § 8(1)h. Thus specific policies must be prepared to serve them. Provision of financial benefit during education and training for the labour market was introduced within amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, in force since 1st May 2008. During the training lasting at least one month and maximum 6 months has the disabled person right to receive benefit equivalent to the subsistence minimum (currently EUR 185.19 monthly). Evaluation conducted by the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family at the beginning of 2009 however indicates insufficient efficiency of this measure (see the policy example below). Graduates from training still remain not competitive on the labour market, partly due to crisis and low creation of jobs. This very likely contributed to the low attractiveness of this measure – disabled people showed low interest in training and related benefits.

Stronger support for sheltered workshops is considered appropriate as a parallel supportive intervention, as employers remained reluctant to offering jobs for disabled and prefer to pay financial fees instead of this.

Companies with more than 20 employees must hire 3.2 % of disabled workers, according to the Act on Employment Services, or provide compensation in case they are not able to do it. Thus, there are three options to comply with the law: Direct employment of disabled workers, contracting disabled people from the outside for provision of goods or service, and paying a fee to a public fund, which finances technical adjustments and renovation in the supported and sheltered workplaces. In 2007, thus before crisis, only 6 044 employers out of 13 227 obliged to do so, directly employed people with disabilities, and 826 employers awarded a contract offering the work for disabled people. 3 806 employers preferred not to engage disabled people and decided to pay fees in full extent. Many others responded to the law requirements at least partly by substituting payment.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>People with disabilities: Provision of financial benefit during education and training for the labour market</p> <p>The measure was introduced within the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, in force since 1st May 2008.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>As already indicated above, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities is very high and employment rate low. Therefore, a specific action to reduce this disproportion was needed. Since the training for the labour market of people from this group at risk is considered a core prerequisite for increasing their employability, as it provides them with the possibility to acquire skills needed to perform working activities, the measure was introduced to increase their motivation to participate at longer forms of training by provision of financial benefits during training.</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>The measure is aimed at facilitating the access of people with disabilities to the open labour market or supported employment, to increase their employment rate and decrease their unemployment rate.</p> <p>(c) Target groups</p> <p>Unemployed and employed job seekers with disabilities.</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).</p> <p>The measure has been implemented since May 2008 with coming in force of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. The experience has shown the low utilisation of this measure. Since the beginning of implementation just four unemployed jobs seekers with disabilities participated at labour market training supported by financial benefit. The low absorption of this measure is linked to total unwillingness of employers to employ disabled</p>

people, which results in low interest of these people in labour market training. Disabled job seekers participating in education and training for the labour market or in training lasting more than one month are entitled to a benefit. The title to benefit is decided and the benefit is provided by the office of labour, social affairs and family. The title to benefit starts at the training beginning and expires at the training closing. The benefit is provided for a calendar month and equals to the subsistence minimum (EUR 185.19 as of 1st July 2009).

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

The measure is implemented and benefits are provided in the same amount nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The measure is part of active labour market measures focused on increasing employment and employability of people with disabilities.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Based on the data of the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family it can be stated that the measure has not proved to be a success. The main reasons include the low interest of employers in employment of people with disabilities, the resulting unclear focus of labour market training, and the impact of crisis resulting in the decrease of total labour force demand, dismissals of employees and increase of unemployment.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

Indicators of success were not explicitly set, however, it can be stated that the measure has not contributed to increasing the employment and employability of people with disabilities.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

As the measure has not been successful no integration into other policies can be reported.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Implementation of this measure resulted in diversification of the range of tools addressing

people with disabilities. Currently, no evaluation analyses are available concerning both its implementation or barriers hampering its successful implementation. It is, however, assumed that one of the main obstacles is that the measure has not been interlinked with other existing measures to support employment of people with disabilities, e.g. with the provision of financial contribution to employers to establish sheltered workshops or sheltered workplaces.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

It would be necessary to carry out the comprehensive evaluation of existing implementation aimed at identification of reasons of low absorption and identification of positive solutions in further implementation of this measure.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 5/2005 Coll. on Employment Services in latter wording,

www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=1153

Realizácia nástrojov aktívnej politiky trhu práce za rok 2008 [Implementation of active labour market policy tools in 2008]. Internal document of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Bratislava: ÚPSVAR, 2009.

Statistics on ALMP tools www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-tp-statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-trhu-prace-2009.html?page_id=1251

Returners to the labour market after interruption of service

Any registered unemployed asking for registration at the labour office, including returners to the labour market, should be subjected to the individual or group counselling. Those identified as belonging to the group at risk should be privileged in the elaboration of the Individual Action Plan aimed at the development of the profile of the unemployed and at identification of a suitable active labour market policy instrument to serve him/her appropriately.

This kind of specific cases also includes parents returning to the labour market who are at risk “due to inability of harmonizing duties at work with his/her parental obligations”, according to § 8(1)d of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. A labour office can also offer them a specific contribution according to § 46(10) to compensate costs caused by taking care of children of pre-school age during the counselling. Only 4 women and 1 man were however supported by this benefit of about EUR 145 each in 2008.

This group at risk consisting predominantly of women is also best served by training for the labour market. In 2008, 12 101 out of interested people were placed in training for the labour market, of which 7 474 (61.8 %) women. However, only 218 women placed in training for the labour market were classified as belonging to this group at risk. A labour office can stimulate participation of returning women with pre-school children by contribution according to § 46(7) to compensate costs caused by taking care of children of pre-school age during the training. In early 2010, it is EUR 43.16 for one child and EUR 33.20 for any other child. Recently, due to weak job creation caused by the crisis, specific self-employment training is offered in large amounts, followed by the provision of financial contribution to start own business. In 2008, there were 2 034 people retrained for self-employment (i.a. also focusing on elaboration of business plan) and 1 250 unemployed started their own business after receiving the financial start-up contribution. The amount of this contribution depends on regional conditions. It is up to 35 % of average regional labour costs multiplied by 16 in the

Bratislava Region and regions with the unemployment rate lower or equal to the national average unemployment rate in the previous year. In regions with a higher unemployment rate the respective percentage is maximum 45 %. More detailed data are offered by a subsequent bylaw: In 2009, the aforementioned percentage shares were set to 16 % and 25 %. Out of all 12 096 people benefiting from this contribution 4 624 were women, however, just about 120 were classified as belonging to the group at risk of returners. It is too early to assess whether incentives to start own business will prove efficient. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family supports this measure due to the low creation of new jobs and due to low efficiency of other financial incentives.

This group at risk was also targeted by diverse demand driven ESF projects; e.g. during the 2004-2006 programming period within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 2 “Reinforcement of Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities on the Labour Market”, Measure 2.2 “Elimination of Barriers which Prevent Equality of Men and Women on the Labour Market with Emphasis on the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life”. Projects supported within this measure usually included specific training components focused on acquiring or updating skills required at the labour market. Language and ICT courses were dominant. The 2007-2013 Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion addresses the issue within its Priority Axis 2 “Supporting Social Inclusion”, Measure 2.3 “Promoting the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life and Care of Small Children”.

On 21st June 2006 the government approved the policy paper “Draft Measures for Reconciling Work and Family Life for 2006 with an Outlook for 2010”, which was also reflected by the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion. The paper focused dominantly on legislative and social aspects of employment, such as raising awareness of employers on flexible employment forms and promoting establishment of support services for families. Although there were measures to improve access and flexibility of LLL discussed, no clearly identified measures resulted from the paper. An increasing number of places in kindergartens remain considered a crucial contribution in support of women employment, in particular labour market returners, in large cities, where self-governing authorities are not able to offer enough places in kindergartens. Although responsible for maintaining kindergartens by law, they are not assigned to cover demand of inhabitants. A shortage of places resulting from closing kindergarten and selling facilities by self-governing authorities during the period of population decline is not easy to compensate in the current period of revival and increasing birth rate.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Facilitating reintegration into the labour market by improved access to education and training to persons with family duties through provision of financial contribution for services to families with children

The measure was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, being in force since 1st February 2004.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

The employment rate for women in Slovakia in 2007 was 53.0 %, which was 5.3 percentage points less compared to the EU27 average (58.3 %). In order to achieve the Lisbon strategy objective to increase the employment rate for women up to 60 % it was necessary to create the environment that would increase the employment of persons (women/parents) with family duties. According to 4Q 2007 LFS data there were 64.2 thousand women at the maternity leave, which represented 5.5 % of economically inactive women in Slovakia. Thus, measures to harmonise working and family life were seen as significant for influencing the increase in female employment.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

In order to facilitate women's/parents' return to the labour market, the measure was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, to facilitate the access of women/parents (unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers) to further training and to stimulate their participation in education and training for the labour market programmes. Women/parents taking care of a child before entering compulsory education (up to 6 years of age) and participating in education and training for the labour market courses organised by public employment services are provided with a financial contribution. The contribution is serving the purpose to cover a part of expenses linked to the care for a child in pre-school establishments or the care provided by a private person during education and training for the labour market.

(c) Target groups

Women/parents (unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers) taking care of a child before entering compulsory education.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The measure has been implemented since 2004.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

The measure was introduced nation-wide. Unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers had to submit a written application for provision of contribution to the office of labour, social affairs and family. The contributions are provided during education and training for the labour market only. The total amount of contribution depends on the number of children in pre-school age. The contribution was SKK 1 300 (approx. EUR 43) for one child and SKK 1 000 (approx. EUR 33) for any other child. It was EUR 43.16 and EUR 33.20, respectively, in 2009.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The contribution accompanies the employment policy measure focused on increasing the employment of disadvantaged groups at the labour market and the social policy focused on support of social inclusion.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

The measure was aimed at elimination of barriers to participation of women/parents taking care of pre-school age children at education and training for the labour market programmes, and thus enhancing their chances at the labour market. At the same time, the measure was intended to create conditions for applying the principle of equal opportunities in the access of disadvantaged groups to the labour market. Following this, not quantitative data but rather a qualitative aspect (improved access) is considered relevant.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available)

The measure was aimed at elimination of barriers to participation of women/parents taking care of pre-school age children at education and training for the labour market programmes, and thus enhancing their chances at the labour market. At the same time, the measure was intended to create conditions for applying the principle of equal opportunities in the access of disadvantaged groups to the labour market. Following this, not quantitative data but rather a qualitative aspect (improved access) is considered relevant.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

Indicators of success were not explicitly set.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

Experience from the policy is reflected within other active labour market policies.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Originally, the contribution for services to families with children was targeted to job seekers only, which resulted in different approach towards unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers. In order to eliminate these differences in the access to education and training for the labour market, the amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. introduced the provision of similar benefits also to employed job seekers.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

As the instrument was financed from the ESF the documentation of eligible expenditures is administratively difficult. Problems also occur regarding contribution entitlement in case unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers do not complete the education and training programme.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 5/2005 Coll. on Employment Services in latter wording,
www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=1153

Long-term unemployed

Despite improvement due to the favourable economic developments in 2004-2008, the long-term unemployment rate (12 months and more) still remains among the highest in the EU (6.6 % compared to 2.6 % EU27 in 2008, Eurostat) and it is still considered a huge problem of the Slovak labour market.

Table 5.8: Long-term unemployment rate

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
EU27	4.0	4.1	4.2	n/a	3.7	3.1	2.6
Slovakia	12.2	11.4	11.8	11.7	10.2	8.3	6.6

Source: Eurostat

Note: n/a - data not available

The risk of long-term unemployment is the highest in a group of low educated. As visible from the following table, the long-term unemployment rates of low educated are for a long period significantly higher than rates of people with a medium or higher level of attained education.

Table 5.9: Long-term unemployment rate by age and level of education (%)

Year	LTU rate*	Level of education				Age		
		ISCED 2	ISCED 3C	ISCED 3A, 4	ISCED 5+	15-24	25-49	50+
2002	11.1	32.9	12.6	7.7	1.7	17.5	10.1	9.0
2003	10.7	36.2	12.0	6.7	2.0	16.2	9.8	9.3
2004	10.9	38.3	12.5	6.6	2.4	13.8	10.2	16.0
2005	11.0	43.5	12.5	6.4	1.9	16.8	10.3	9.8
2006	9.7	42.3	11.1	5.5	1.3	15.3	9.1	8.8
2007	7.8	38.9	8.9	3.9	1.3	10.9	7.4	7.6
2008	6.4	33.6	7.4	3.1	1.1	9.2	6.0	5.9

Source: Statistical Office, LFS, 2002-2008

Note: * long-term unemployment rate according to national LFS data

A decrease of long-term unemployment is among key challenges addressed by the employment policy. The long-term unemployed are indicated as a group of risk by § 8(1)c of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, and therefore prioritised in placement into activities corresponding to the measures implemented according to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. The measures were funded from the state budget and from ESF funds via national ESF projects. Within the 2004-2006 programming period this group belonged to the target groups within National Project I “Support for employing the unemployed with an emphasis on disadvantaged groups in the labour market” (with relevance to § 49 “contribution for self-employment” and § 50 “contribution for employing a disadvantaged job seeker” of the Act), National Project V “Activation of the unemployed and the unemployed with low motivation dependent on the social assistance benefit” (with relevance to § 52 “allowance for activation”), and National Projects III and IIIA focused on education and training for the

labour market (with relevance to § 46 “education and training for the labour market of unemployed and employed job seekers”). The new programming period 2007-2013 is continuing in activities embedded into new national projects, of which the most relevant are those corresponding to the aforementioned National Projects I, III and V.

In 2008, 19 233 applications for labour market training were registered by labour offices, of which 62.9 % (12 004 unemployed and 97 employed job seekers) were accepted. Out of all accepted 6 526 people belonged to some group at risk stipulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll., of which 3 856 long-term unemployed represented 59.1 % of people at risk and 32.1 % of all unemployed accepted for labour market training. Only 29.4 % of retrained people belonging to groups at risk were placed into labour market, while 33.7 % were placed of all retrained. Detailed data on long-term unemployed placement are not available, however, the placement of the long-term unemployed is disproportionally lower, as visible from their low outflow from the registry.

In the first half of 2009, 11 395 unemployed and 16 employed job seekers were accepted for labour market training. Out of them 4 857 belonged to groups at risk, of which 2 016 were the long-term unemployed. The long-term unemployed represented 41.5 % of people at risk and 17.7 % of all accepted unemployed for labour market training. As visible from these figures the numbers of people served by employment services dramatically increased in absolute numbers, however, a share of people at risk decreased from 59.1 % to 41.5 % as a consequence of the crisis bringing huge amounts of newly dismissed people to labour offices. 24.8 % of all retrained people were placed in the labour market. The efficiency of the placement after training naturally decreased due to larger absolute numbers of trained and a lower job creation caused by the crisis. Furthermore, the important contribution to reintegration into the labour market comes from the coincidence of labour market training and contribution to self-employment conditioned by specific labour market training. A table below indicates an increase in people entering the labour market via supported self-employment since the onset of the crisis in 2008.

Table 5.10: People receiving contribution for self-employment in 2004-2009

Measure	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*
§ 49	5 618	9 908	10 477	10 038	12 096	5 215

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Notes: § 49 Contribution for self-employment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services

* first half of 2009

In 2009, out of 5 215 benefited, 1 856 were people at risk prioritised by employment services and 944 (50.9 %) of people at risk entering labour market were long-term unemployed stimulated by covering their start-up costs and by retraining to self-employment. There is no data available yet on sustainability.

Another instrument to employ the long-term unemployed, newly introduced by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, are social enterprises. Costs substantially covered from the ESF were aimed at labour market training and employment of long-term unemployed in regions featuring extremely high unemployment. Eight pilot social enterprises were created in 2008 with the envisaged end of piloting in 2010-2011. Out of total EUR 25 052 315.46 committed, EUR 11.3 million have been already provided to social enterprises. Current results are, however, subject of heavy criticism. This instrument, well-known from other countries offering long-term unemployed people (often also low-skilled) employment possibilities in regions not attractive for investors and with a long history of low job creation, seems to lack efficiency so far.

Long-term unemployed people in Slovakia are as a rule low educated and employed or looking for employment with low wages. A new measure caused by the crisis has been introduced since May 2008. Contributions to cover levies to social and health insurance funds are offered to employers able to employ the former long-term unemployed in a low-paid job below 50 % of national monthly average wage. In the recognition of low efficiency of retraining of these people in time of the crisis with the newly created army of skilled unemployed workers, lowering labour costs and making creation of jobs for these people more attractive for employers is currently considered the best tool (see the example below).

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Contribution to support maintaining employment of employees with low wages</p> <p>The measure was introduced since 1st May 2008.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>The long-term unemployed in Slovakia are represented by the groups of people with low education and qualification levels. When placed on the labour market they can expect jobs at minimum wage levels. One of the main obstacles hampering employment of long-term unemployed is their low motivation to return to the labour market due to insignificant difference between the expected wage and social benefits they receive from the social care system. This resulted in the need to launch a measure to support entering the labour market by the long-term unemployed, to accept low-way job and stay in this job.</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>The main aim was to increase the motivation of long-term unemployed to enter employment with low wage and to stay in it, and to enhance the interest of employers in employment of long-term unemployed people. The measure covers financial contribution provided to employer who employed a job seeker. The contribution is provided to cover social and health insurance levies paid to respective funds by the employer. The contribution is provided in case the gross wage of full-time employee does not exceed 50 % of national monthly average wage. A maximum period for provision of the contribution is 24 months.</p> <p>(c) Target groups</p> <p>The measure addresses the group of employees with low wages who were registered as unemployed job seekers before entering the respective employment. It is focused on decreasing and preventing unemployment, including long-term unemployment.</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).</p> <p>The measure is part of active labour market measures. It has been implemented since 1st May 2008. According to the data of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, 1 251 employees with low wages, of which 70 % women, were supported by this measure since</p>

launching of the measure till mid-2009. The largest group of addressees came from employees who belonged to long-term unemployed prior to their employment.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The measure is part of active labour market measures focused on both increasing the employability of groups at risk at the labour market and their social inclusion.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- Employers.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Following the assessment of quantitative data, the implementation of this measure can be considered a success. Entering and keeping employment by unemployed persons and persons with a low level of education was supported by wages subsidies, which prevented from worsening the long-term unemployment as well as from exclusion from the labour market.

Design of this measure and setting the period for provision of contribution to 24 months, including additional terms in the contract for provision of contribution (e.g. setting the maximum amounts of contribution and obligation of employer to pay back the whole contribution or its part in case the agreed terms are not met) created preconditions for preventing from abuse by employers.

Evaluation analyses addressing implementation of this measure are currently not available.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

The indicator of success in implementation of this measure covers the number of employees with wage subsidies. 1 251 persons were affected since launching the measure till 30th June 2009.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The measure is part of national employment policy aimed at increasing employment, decreasing unemployment and social inclusion of persons at risk on the labour market.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

No serious obstacles have been encountered during the implementation of the measure. The interest of employers in contribution could be considered stable.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

One of the issues linked to implementation of this measure refers to keeping employment after the provision of contribution is stopped (after 24 months). This issue should be addressed within the comprehensive evaluation of the efficiency of this measure.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 5/2005 Coll. on Employment Services in latter wording,

www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=1153

Realizácia nástrojov aktívnej politiky trhu práce za rok 2008 [Implementation of active labour market policy tools in 2008]. Internal document of Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Bratislava: ÚPSVAR, 2009.

Statistics on ALMP tools www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-tp-statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-trhu-prace-2009.html?page_id=1251

Graduates

The unemployment rate of youth in Slovakia is for a long time over the average of EU. After a short period of improvement peaking in 2008 there is steep increase visible in 2009 caused by the crisis.

Table 5.11: Unemployment rate of population aged below 25

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU27	18.0	18.1	18.5	18.3	17.1	15.3	15.4	19.7
Slovakia	37.7	33.4	33.1	30.1	26.6	20.3	19.0	27.4

Source: Eurostat, LFS

Not only young low skilled but also qualified graduates of schools are at high risk of unemployment. Thus, graduates of schools are indicated as a group at risk by § 8(1)d of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. The Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family therefore collects and publishes data about registered graduates (not entering employment up to two years after graduation) twice a year: In May before inflow of new graduates from schools and in the expected peak of unemployment in September.

Difficulties in placement into labour market with indication of worsening caused by the crisis are visible from the following data: There were 12 683 registered unemployed graduates as of May 2007, with a peak of 19 134 graduates as of September 2007, going down to 10 479 as of May 2008 and peaking with 19 404 as of September 2008. However, no traditional subsequent decrease occurred later, as there were 19 705 graduates registered in May 2009 followed by a steep increase up to 33 370 registered unemployed graduates in September 2009.

The increase in registered graduates from 19 134 in September 2007 up to 33 370 in September 2009 (174.4 %) naturally goes over the increase of all registered unemployed within the same period (150.1%), indicating the extraordinary vulnerability of graduates. All registered unemployed increased from 245 253 in September 2007 (with a preliminary decrease down to 228 659 in September 2008) up to 368 021 in September 2009. Moreover, a further increase up to 396 205 in February 2010 indicates even harder conditions for employment of graduates in 2010.

School graduates practice is an instrument corresponding to § 51 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services targeting graduates from secondary and tertiary schools who are maximum 2 years after graduation and failed to enter employment. Within the graduate practice a graduate works up to 20 hours weekly for the period up to six months. Based on the contract between a labour office and a school graduates, he/she receives contribution equal to the level of subsistence minimum provided to one adult person according to Act No. 601/2003 Coll. on Subsistence Minimum.

The graduate practice is aimed at acquiring vocational skills and practical experience at employer's workplace in order to expand graduates' employability by improving his/her professional skills and by gaining practical experience from employment. Although not certified by any special procedure, it is considered a successful instrument with a clear advantage for participants, as it is reported that it really improves their skills. There are however, no data about interlinking study field and skills to be developed during the graduate practice as well as about the direct impact of graduate practice on later employment. There is just data about subsequent placement, however without estimation of the deadweight. E.g., out of 63 360 participants at the graduate practice organised in 2004-2008 within National Programme IX, 4 948 participants were employed in 2008. The graduate practice is popular with employers from public and state administration looking for ISCED 3A graduates from administration and economic study fields, however, there is usually a low chance for subsequent permanent employment. In the business sector, there is demand for graduates from programmes related to services.

A contribution for the graduate practice is an obligatory instrument, thus all eligible applicants must be served. Originally, only graduates of schools were eligible for this instrument and not immediately after registration, and the financial contribution was intended just to reduce their costs caused by the graduate practice (for instance by travelling to work place). They were e.g. given SKK 1 500 (about EUR 50, according to the conversion rate EUR 1 = SKK 30.1260) in 2007, but since 2008 this philosophy has been left and the contribution has been increased in order to offer them the subsistence minimum (e.g. EUR 185.19 in July 2009). This change made the graduate practice much more attractive, as the real income from graduate practice per hour became competitive with starting net wages in some regions and professions. Furthermore, the original regulation allowing to enter the graduate practice just after three months of registration at the labour office and to participate in it only one time were cancelled in a view of deterioration of graduates position on the labour market. Moreover, the graduate practice has become open also for non graduates aged up to 25.

This instrument was supported by National Project IX Graduate Practice from the 2004-2006 ESF Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources and Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 (finally lasting till May 2009).

Table 5.12: Graduate practice according to NP IX lasting since 1st July 2004 to 30th June 2009

	Budget EUR	All participants	Graduates	Young people up to 25	Total employed within 3 months after finishing
SOP	17 528 891.42	61 519	43 861	17 658	29 %
SPD	681 819.00	238	193	45	n/a
Total	18 210 710.42	61 757	44 054	17 703	n/a

Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, ESF and SPD Managing authorities

Note: n/a - not available

The graduate practice has been also financed from the state budget. In 2008, 5 970 graduate practice participants were financed from NP IX and 1 481 from the state budget, while 3 685 and 169, respectively, within the first half of 2009. The graduate practice is not to be financed from the European money anymore, and therefore, the follow up to NP IX has not been prepared. Since 2010 the graduate practice will be financed from the state budget only.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Graduates of secondary schools practice in a workplace

The policy was introduced within Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, valid since 1st February 2004, revised by amendments of this act valid since 1st May 2008 and detailed by the Decrees of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (recently by the Decree No. 420/2009 Coll.)

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale

Unemployment of young people is a long-term problem, within which two groups at risk are identified

- low educated and non-qualified (very often Roma) who need to gain qualification to be able to assert on the labour market;
- graduates of secondary schools unable to find a job due to a mismatch in qualification or due to a lack of practice in case employers are looking for experienced staff.

The second group is targeted by this policy. Interested graduates are placed into workplaces based on an agreement between an employer and public employment services.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets

The main objective is to develop employment skills and specific vocational skills attractive for employers.

A graduate is expected to work 20 hours weekly for six months, receiving remuneration, which has raised from the initial SKK 1 500 to SKK 1 700, etc., up to SKK 5 130 per month since May 2008 and EUR 185.19 in July 2009. After finishing practice a graduate receives a certificate about practice; his/her participation at work is not considered employment, but a workplace learning period. The placement of graduates is considered an ultimate goal of the policy, however, it is impossible to check the efficiency of the tool individually. Only aggregate data is available, without specific analyses.

(c) Target groups/education level(s)/sector(s)

Unemployed graduates of schools up to 2 years after completing secondary or tertiary education and below 25 years of age registered with labour offices.

(d) Status of implementation

Policy is being implemented since 2004, according to § 51 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services.

Number of graduates placed in graduate practice in 2004-2009

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of enrolled	14 462	24 838	14 503	8 937	7 451	11 764

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

A number of enrolled decreased with decreasing unemployment and increasing job creation. The crisis caused a substantial increase in enrolment.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide, administered regionally.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is implemented within a cluster of tools of active labour market policy instruments stipulated by the act on employment services.

(c) Key actors involved

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affair and Family;
- Centre of Labour, Social Affair and Family;
- Offices of Labour, Social Affair and Family.

3. Assessment of the policy/measure

(a) Assessment of impact (including results of evaluation studies)

No specific evaluation studies were conducted, as the measure is not in essence considered problematic. On the other hand, the latest increase in remuneration of graduates, which is equal to subsistence minimum, might prove counterproductive in the future.

(b) Indicators of success;

No specific indicators of success have been set.

(c) Integration of outcomes into other policies

Expectations as well as results are taken into account within elaboration of the Individual Action Plan for respective unemployed. Alternative tools might be applied if graduate practice is not considered appropriate. Currently, almost all graduates willing to do so are

enrolled in this policy. Alternatively, they may be placed in retraining (12 % of all unemployed enrolled in retraining) or given a contribution to start their own business (11 % of all unemployed affected by this tool). Some graduates are employed due to the specific contribution given to employers for employing disadvantaged job seekers (10 % of all affected unemployed are graduates).

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Graduates considered remuneration too low not understanding that it was intended to be a contribution to cover their costs related to workplace learning opportunity. These complaints were accepted by decision makers and the financial contribution were increased and finally made equal to the minimum subsistence cost.

Labour offices wanted employers to plan working activities equally distributed among all working days, and they explicitly refused to accept work-sheets for 8 hours per day to prevent from concentration of required work load of 20 hours in few days. In practice, however, it is impossible to check whether work-sheets correspond with reality.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

20 working hours per week for SKK 5 130 net, which was over SKK 10 000 net for full employment, might have been considered a better choice than direct entering employment. Thus, evaluation of the policy has to be performed to prevent from this effect. Furthermore, a study aimed at identification of specific and non-specific skills gained within graduate practice is needed to get feedback for adjusting IVET to labour market needs. In the future, graduate practice should be aimed at developing specific skills. The current crisis, however, caused postponement of any efficiency seeking corrections. Even more, graduates are now eligible for placement into graduate practice immediately after their registration, in contrast to 3-month period of registration before 1st November 2009.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 5/2005 Coll. on Employment Services in latter wording, and the relevant decrees,

www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=1153

Statistics on ALMP tools www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-tp-statistiky/aktivne-opatrenia-trhu-prace-2009.html?page_id=1251

Roma

Ethnic statistics on Roma is not available, as collecting data on the ethnic principle is forbidden. Ethnic Roma are free to decide about their nationality and a dominant part declares themselves Slovaks or Hungarians. There were 379 200 ethnic Roma living in Slovakia in 2000, according to demographic estimation, of which 40 % lived in concentrated settlements with weak infrastructure. According to the 2001 Census, only 89 920 inhabitants of Slovakia declared themselves Roma, representing only the fragment of all ethnic Roma. A low level of education of declared Roma is indicated by the following table. Only about 20 % of 20-24 aged received ISCED 3C or higher level education, in contrast to about 90 % of the total population of the same age group.

Table 5.13: All young inhabitants and young Roma* by level of education according to Census 2001

	All inhabitants aged 20-24		Roma* aged 20-24	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
ISCED 3C - 6	417 026	89.4	1 661	19.9

Source: Statistical Office (Census 2001, the next census will take place in 2011)

Note: * those who declared themselves belonging to Roma nationality in 2001 Census

As already mentioned, the Slovak education system has difficulties to respond to specific learning needs of Roma and in particular to reflect the different culture of non-integrated Roma inhabitants to the majority population society. Statistics as above can be seen as the clear proof of discrimination together with the high rate of enrolment of Roma into special schools originally designed for the mentally handicapped. Long years of unsuccessful policies to improve the qualification level of Roma, however, also indicate a culture clash.

The traditional sequence education - training for the profession – employment followed by the majority population is seen with mistrust, in particular by families from segregated settlements, producing a vicious circle of mistrust in education inducing unemployment and unemployment inducing the mistrust in education. After the decades of the development of series of strategies and measures (see the example of initiative below), almost no progress can be seen. The Slovak education system based on stressing academic subjects and theory in instruction over practical activities in primary education and it fails to offer alternatives to pupils with different learning styles as well as life priorities. It is clear that the aforementioned circle is easier to be broken by the positive discrimination on the labour market, with the subsequent validation of workplace learning. This avenue has not been seriously explored yet due to the high competitiveness on the labour market and the reluctance of inhabitants towards affirmative actions. Nevertheless, there are positive examples: In 2002 U. S. Steel launched a project focused on the employment of long-term unemployed Roma. Creation of jobs was funded from the company's own sources without state subsidies. Potential employees were recruited by self-governing authorities following requirements set by the company. The best performing candidates participating at training organised by the company were offered working positions. The workers are employed by self-governments, but paid by the company. In 2008, the number of “leased” Roma reached 158, nevertheless, due to the crisis and quite high turnover, this number dropped to 81 in December 2009, and the company stopped the recruitment of new workers.

More examples of job provision together with targeted practical training are urgently needed to break a vicious circle of mistrust in education as the way to employment and better living conditions. Although Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning has opened the door for recognition of partial qualifications and gradually for validation of experiential learning, further development is urgently needed in order to offer Roma qualifications transferable also to jobs in other enterprises. In parallel of course, also changes in initial education system are needed. In addition to motivation scholarships to prevent Roma from early school leaving and financial contributions to Roma families benefiting them for sending their children to schools properly to fulfil compulsory education (which is by the way criticised as discriminatory towards families sticking to the law without any incentive) and harder fighting misplacement of Roma children into special schools, additional policies must be introduced.

There are two policies easy to introduce as they can adjust the current education system to these specific learners needs:

- It is necessary to build upon the experience with Roma assistants facilitating contacts with schools and Roma families, as well as complementing classroom instruction with explanation in the Roma language for children with the limited command of language of instruction. A current practice of sticking to formal qualification of Roma assistants is counterproductive and should be replaced by short retraining or validation of skills needed for this position at least for a current period, when qualified Roma serving as Roma assistants are not available;
- As it is often very difficult to bring Roma children to schools, it is necessary to bring schools closer to Roma inhabitants. A pioneering example is a school dependency established in a well-known Roma village Jarovnice in 2007. The Prešov Self-Governing Region authority initiated the provision of training delivered by three regional VET schools directly in premises in Jarovnice. Motivation scholarships together with schools at a close distance from students' houses proved successful, as students attended school regularly.

The newest initiative promoted by the government and supported by the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities is the establishment of boarding schools. Details of this measure are left for elaboration to a new government to be created after elections in June 2010. Voluntary enrolment and agreement of families have been declared by the Plenipotentiary as a ruling principle amid the criticism considering boarding schools as discrimination and deepening segregation of Roma (see the example below).

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Increasing a level of education of Roma and preventing Roma living in settlements from social exclusion

The policy was originally based on the strategy paper Concept of Education of Roma Children and Pupils, approved by the Ministry of Education Gremium on 19th April 2001, and incorporated into the national strategy paper National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for Next 15-20 Years, approved by the government on 19th December 2001, and subsequently by the parliament in 2002.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

According to the 2001 Census, 89 920 inhabitants of Slovakia declared themselves Roma. The table below indicates the extremely low education level (maximum ISCED 2) of young Roma, as about 80 % of them have not been able to obtain qualification.

All young inhabitants and young Roma* by level of education according to Census 2001

	All inhabitants aged 20-24		Roma* aged 20-24	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
ISCED 0-2	40 251	8.6	6 131	73.6
ISCED 3C	100 687	21.6	1 126	13.5
ISCED 3C – SSS	18 507	4.0	213	2.6
ISCED 3A – SVS	68 235	14.6	148	1.8
ISCED 3A – SSS	137 995	29.6	96	1.2

ISCED3A – G	67 641	14.5	59	0.7
ISCED 5B	2 296	0.5	4	0.0
ISCED 5A**	5 350	1.1	9	0.1
ISCED 5A	16 097	3.5	6	0.1
ISCED 6	218	0.0	0	0.0
Without education	1 504	0.3	190	2.3
Unknown	7 547	1.6	346	4.2
Total	466 328	100.0	8 328	100.0
ISCED 3C - 6	417 026	89.4	1 661	19.9

Source: Statistical Office (Census 2001, the next census will take place in 2011)

Notes: * those who declared themselves belonging to Roma nationality in 2001 Census,

** bachelor

SSS – secondary specialised schools, SVS – secondary vocational schools, G – grammar schools

However, according to demographic estimations, there were 379 200 ethnic Roma living in Slovakia in 2000, and according to a sociographic mapping from 2004, 40 % of ethnic Roma lived in concentrated settlements with weak infrastructure, while 146 528 in settlements with inappropriate background for educating young people. No precise data is available about ethnic Roma, as collection of data based on ethnicity is considered violation of law.

There are several reasons of the low level of education of Roma, two most indicated are as follows:

- Many Roma were channelled into special schools due to their failure to pass school maturity tests designed for mainstream population, with no option to proceed in secondary education and to obtain VET qualification at least on ISCED 3C level;
- Roma parents are not always able to decide about the choice of schools that would be in the best interest of their children, considering special schools appropriate for their children due to unimportant reasons (closer distance to their homes, less demanding education, attendance of other Roma children).

Although it is strictly forbidden to enrol children without mental handicap into special schools and the Ministry of Education permanently urged authorities to prevent from this, it was not easy to fix this problem, as many young Roma are lagging behind in school maturity tests due to non-stimulating environment in the family and/or lacking command of the language of instruction, which maturity tests were not sensitive enough to. Moreover, enrolment of such pupils is financially more attractive for special schools than for mainstream schools, as financial contribution cannot compensate the costs for adjustment of programme to learning needs of such a pupil, and therefore, he/she might easily develop a low-achiever syndrome in contrast with less demanding special school.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

- Improve a level of education of target group;
- Fully prevent from incorrect placement of target group children in special schools;
- Gradually achieve at least ISCED 3C level qualification for all.

(c) Target groups

- Roma children and pupils;
- Socially challenged children and pupils (among which many ethnic Roma are included);
- Parents;
- School directors and educators;
- Local/Regional authorities.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The policy building on experience from many activities including PHARE projects in the 1990s and early 2000s and based on the aforementioned strategy papers has been permanently monitored and updated, as visible from the following documents submitted to the government:

- Current Situation in Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils, elaborated by the Ministry of Education in 2003;
- Concept of Integrated Education of Roma Children and Youth Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education, approved by the government on 26th May 2004;
- Current Situation in Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Youth, elaborated by the Ministry of Education in 2006;
- Concept of Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education, approved by the government on 2nd April 2008.

Furthermore, this policy was interrelated to other initiatives, e.g.

- Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015; the Slovak National Action Plan was elaborated responding to this initiative and of course including measures aimed at education;
- Medium-Term Concept of the Development of Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic SOLIDARITY – INTEGRITY – INCLUSION 2008 – 2013, stressing importance in education and indicating priorities for future projects co-funded from EU funds in the 2007-2013 programming period (EUR 200 million is envisaged).

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the Slovak presidency (1st July 2009 till 30th June 2010) influenced policies as well as strengthening cooperation among nations and learning from multinational experience. Within this presidency Decade's National Action Plans are in the process of revision. The Slovak government discussed results of the Slovak National Action Plan in its meeting on 4th February 2009; a workshop aimed at the revision of Slovak National Action Plan organised in cooperation with UNDP is planned for May 2010.

Furthermore, specific projects of 2004-2006 ESF SOP Human Resources were aimed at addressing education and training in concord with this policy as well. About EUR 365 million is earmarked to be allocated in the 2007-2013 programming period.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

Nation-wide with a special focus on the Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice Self-Governing Regions with a high share of inhabitants of Roma nationality (14.19 %, 14.49 % and 19.24 % of Roma pupils in basic schools, respectively).

Nevertheless, while about 8 % of pupils in basic schools are of Roma nationality, the share of socially disadvantaged is over 15 % and the number of ethnic Roma is even substantially higher, however, unknown (and containing a full variety of learners from excellent to poor).

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is not isolated, as visible from the list of documents above. Moreover, all

activities are coordinated by the Office of Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities as actions to combat unemployment, improve housing conditions and settlements infrastructure, prevent from social exclusion, as well as to improve educational level, are interrelated.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Governmental, regional and local authorities (i.a. Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities);
- Schools;
- NGOs.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

A conference "Roma and the Labour Market" aimed at identification of best practice and opportunities offered a feedback from assessment of implementation of various measures. This conference offered lessons/learned statements concerning

- main characteristics of the situation of the Roma;
- status of the Roma in the labour market with 9 conclusions concerning education, of which two most VET relevant are important to be stressed here:
 - adjust vocational training to the needs of local labour markets and give preference to training and acquisition of practical experience directly in the workplace and by combining vocational training and practical preparation;
 - influencing the attitudes of the Roma adult population for sending their children to school, for becoming assistants to their children during education, creating of new supporting models of assistants training for children with special needs.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

No explicit indicators of success were set, but indicators of final success can be described as follows:

- No incorrect placement of target group children in special schools;
- At least ISCED 3C level qualification gained by all target group members.

To gradually achieve the first indicator

- the new school maturity tests have been elaborated by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology sensitive to socio-cultural specificities of Roma and preventing from ill-testing caused by temporary lagging behind of children in the development of learning skills;
- enrolment in kindergartens is promoted to support pro-educational skills;
- last year in kindergarten (i.e. for 5/6-year old children) is offered for free since September 2008;
- zero grade classes were opened at mainstream basic schools to facilitate enrolment into education;
- Roma assistants were introduced to schools to facilitate communication between teachers and Roma;
- possibilities to use Roma as a language of instruction were tested; the Roma language was re-codified and is to be standardised in July 2008.

To gradually achieve the second indicator serious obstacles have to be overcome (see part 4); nevertheless some measures have been already identified:

- scholarships for socially disadvantaged;
- secondary schools for gifted Roma students;
- detached classes of VET schools;
- dormitory-type schools;
- obtaining qualification based on recognition of experiential learning;
- provision of VET in branches, which were identified as attractive for Roma – nine branches for boys and eight branches for girls (as identified in the 2008 Concept of Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Pupils Including the Development of Secondary and Tertiary Education).

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The policy is naturally interrelated and without coherence in respective policies it will not be finally effective. On the other hand, it has been estimated by the Deputy Prime Minister Dušan Čaplovič that 40 % of project money was not used appropriately, according to his statement at the government's press conference on 26th March 2008, and did not result in visible outcomes.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Despite many hard to overcome problems in provision of education appropriate for Roma respecting their socio-cultural specificity, despite latent, intended and unintended discrimination accompanying communication problems between majority and minority, the main obstacle has socio-cultural background. The aforementioned evaluation conference pointed out that “education has not been a traditional and historical component of the Roma culture”, and that as a consequence of this, Roma are insufficiently motivated “for education in the family or community environment”.

It is important to stress that the trivial sequence education - qualification - employment is not seen as a natural path within Roma families living for a long-term on social benefits. Although they might be discriminated at the labour market, they are, and this is crucial, captured by mix of poverty and welfare traps. On the one hand, they experience poverty due to perpetuating conditions inducing low employability and unemployment; on the other hand, they are trapped by social benefits allowing for some sort of limited welfare, as demonstrated below:

Here are social benefits available for parents with four kids living in conditions of material needs as of March 2008: SKK 10 770 net, composed of SKK 5 360 (material needs) + SKK 2 350 (housing) + SKK 2 160 (four children allowances) + SKK 1 900 activation benefit, which a family father usually receives provided he works at least 40 hours monthly (10 hours weekly) under supervision of municipality. In case a father enters a job the family immediately loses material needs and activation benefits (SKK 7 260 net) while a minimum wage is less (about SKK 7 015). Thus, low skilled workers in regions with low job creation and/or close to minimum wage vacancies only are demotivated to enter employment, in particular when living in segregated settlements with poor infrastructure, poor living standards, at the same time, however, with cheap living costs.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Crucial is the policy intended to end a poverty trap. It is necessary to persuade families

- living in a trap-related vicious circle to accept that
- benefitting from social service is linked to the acceptance of education - qualification - (self)employment pattern as an inevitable component of each individual life; and
 - higher living standards are achievable and worth of trying.

Promoting success stories is extremely important and media must create proactive environment, otherwise any positive discrimination measures will not be utilised by those in need and vast resources spent for implementation of projects just consumed rather than facilitating a pivotal change.

Early 2010 debates make the education of Roma children from segregated settlements a hot topic of the election campaign, as the government stresses the importance to establish boarding schools for children from disadvantaged families unable to create appropriate learning conditions for successful performance of their children at school. The human rights groups, e.g. Amnesty International, criticising the idea as unacceptable, are afraid of taking children from their parents to be forcibly placed in boarding schools. What is, however, in the best interests of the child? To stay isolated from the outside world in segregated settlements with poor living standard and a low chance to fully participate in modern society or to be placed in a boarding school ensuring a proper education? The policy is not yet agreed and the government has announced to let a new government resulting from the elections in June 2010 to decide about this. Some Roma leaders support the idea in particular with regard to secondary schools, some oppose it. There is only an agreement about the crucial point. No child can be taken out of its family without an agreement of the family. The increasing number of slum style settlements from 620 in 2000 to 691 in 2009 is adding fuel to the debate.

5. Source, legend

Website of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities office <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk>
Key policy documents are available at <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/1799/vladne-materialy.php>

5.2 Support services for groups at risk

Improving support services

Institutionally, support services for groups at risk are dominantly depending on public employment services, i.e. offices of labour, social affairs and family, as well as on agencies of supported employment (focusing on long-term unemployed and people with disabilities), and partly on agencies of temporary employment. Furthermore, groups at risk are also assisted by less institutionalised players within their programmes focusing on antidiscrimination and human rights improvement. The current crisis, however, hampers these activities in two ways – by a dramatic increase of the unemployed people and by worse conditions for NGOs for fund-raising and receiving grants.

Since 2002, policies aimed at improving support services have been influenced by the practice of respective labour offices of the public legal National Labour Office, and gradually by the reflection of the Lisbon Strategy with the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning with its Key Message 5 “Rethinking guidance and counselling” being one of the first impulses in emerging of a multi-sectoral discourse of the identification of appropriate measures. Strengthened by the accession process and accession into the European Union itself, European goals were

translated into national legislation and ESF operational programmes. In 2004, the provision of public employment services was fully reformed. The National Labour Office was abolished and replaced by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, directly managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and its network of centres containing both employment services and social service, originally offered separately within the different networks of institutions. Furthermore, new Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services have newly designed guidance and counselling within employment services, indicating in detail the difference between career information and guidance within § 42 (in terms of dominant provision of information) and counselling within § 43 (in terms of specialised and individualised service to be only offered by tertiary educated person with the Master's degree). The provision of counselling services, especially for disadvantaged job seekers, was strengthened by the explicitly stipulated introduction of a new tool called the Individual Action Plan to diagnose job seekers and to prepare a written document guiding their employment efforts. Graduates, old people and labour market returners having difficulties to harmonise working and parental obligations are indicated as a preferred group at risk, prioritised in the urgency of elaborating Individual Action Plans.

The unemployment rate increased from the best rate 7.36 % in August 2008, to 12.97 % (348 419 unemployed) in February 2010, according to the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Therefore, the importance of ESF in cofinancing the support for groups at risk has increased. Within the 2004-2006 programming period National Project VII "Increasing the Scope and Quality of Employment Services through Career Information and Guidance and Counselling Instruments and Services" was designed to increase the scope and quality of guidance and counselling services. This project, lasting since 1st July 2004 to 30th June 2005, strengthened capacities and improved services in the regions outside the Bratislava Region. Within this project 282 202 unemployed and employed job seekers and other clients were served. Worth stressing is the elaboration of Individual Action Plans for 85 911 people. As a consequence of the increased quality of guidance and counselling for individuals in terms of methodology and due to the involvement of specialists from non-state institutions, capacities were enhanced and the equipment at contact points improved. Capacities were enhanced, i.a. by the establishment of eight new agencies of supported employment. National Project VIIA "Modernisation of Employment Services through Supporting the Development of Instruments and Forms of Career Information and Guidance Services" and National Project VIIB "Increasing Effectiveness, Modernising and Increasing the Scope of Counselling Services" were launched in August and December 2005, respectively.

National Project VIIA, with duration since 1st August 2005 to 31st December 2008, focused on career information and guidance services to assist clients as regards career selection, including the change of employment and selection of employee. The provision of career information and counselling included newly created online counselling within the employment services main portal www.upsvar.sk, and making people familiar with the specialised portals, e.g. www.profesia.sk, www.istp.sk and www.job.sk. The special attention in provision of services was paid exactly to persons belonging to the groups at risk.

The objective of National Project VIIB, lasting since 1st December 2005 to 30th June 2008, was to increase the effectiveness of counselling services by the emphasis on individualised approach, thus, also on better serving disadvantaged people, in particular long-term unemployed. It served 231 321 unemployed job seekers from regions outside the Bratislava Region. Two important trans-regional projects were conducted by the employment services headquarter. One was aimed at the development of diagnostic instruments and one was targeted on counselling services for the long-term unemployed. Within this specific trans-regional project 90 442 long-term unemployed were served.

Similarly to the ESF Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, National Projects VIIA and VIIB were performed within Single Programming Document Bratislava NUTS II Objective 3. In contrast to other Slovak regions, within the Bratislava Region with almost no unemployment both projects were dominantly aimed at improving the infrastructure rather than at the direct service for clients. 14 620 unemployed job seekers were served by career information and guidance services and 1 967 people were served by guidance services to prevent the unemployment. A specific information system for people with disabilities (REHIS) was developed, and the refinement of portals www.istp.sk (dominantly aimed at the provision of qualification requirements for respective working positions within the database developed in cooperation of Trexima, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Education) and www.upsvar.sk, was achieved within National Project VIIA. Analogously to the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, stressing the development of Individual Action Plans for unemployed job seekers and focusing on long-term unemployed was envisaged within National Project VIIB. It served 10 004 unemployed job seekers from the Bratislava Region, out of which 2 148 were long-term unemployed. In contrast to regions with high unemployment, servicing clients was less dominant compared to the efforts to improve the infrastructure. Three contact centres were established based on the closer cooperation of regional and local players to pilot a new approach to assist all relevant groups in need of employment service: employers, employees and job seekers.

For a new 2007-2013 ESF programming period, National Project VII-2 “Support for Employment Mediation and Counselling Services Provided by Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family” was prepared within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion. This national project covers all regions except the Bratislava Region, building on the earlier experience from the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources.

Refinement of assistance is visible from Activity 2 “Supporting Provision of Employment Services in the 3rd Zone” containing three specific activities, which envisage the expansion of “3rd zone approach” in the labour office practice: 1st zone is aimed at registering and informing, 2nd zone at traditional employment services serving already oriented individuals with identified and agreed active labour market tools, and in the 3rd zone more sophisticated diagnostic instruments are to be applied.

Within Activity 2.1 “Assessment and Development Centres”, implementation of competence assessment of job seekers based on the “assessment centre approach” and making use of international experience should be supported by training of 131 counsellors from all labour offices. In addition to direct training, also practical (supervised) practice is planned, resulting in the assessment of total 5 000 job seekers.

The refinement of assistance to disadvantaged people is also envisaged within the specific Activity 2.2, targeting counselling services of agencies of supported employment working with specific groups at risk. Non-state providers are to be involved in counselling disabled and long-term unemployed based on contracts with labour offices, in particular in the worst hit regions by long-term unemployment. Within Activity 2.3 eleven modules have to be developed as auxiliary instruments aimed at both training of counsellors and benefitting job seekers. The modules have to be disseminated through 300 DVDs, and complemented by targeted training of counsellors.

Strengths

There is a clear progress in coherence in policy making visible from the papers adopted by the government.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, elaborated by the Ministry of Education, was adopted in April 2007. It highlighted i.a. the importance to provide for services in much larger extent and with a broader backing, indicating that guidance services fragmentation into two dominant sectors responsibility (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family) has to be overcome, as there are important groups in need of interventions left unserved. Therefore, a lifelong guidance system had to be established. Such a system would be important for specific groups at risk, e.g. the unemployed not registered with labour offices and diverse marginal groups in need of service going beyond the sectoral focus.

Within the policy paper “Employment Strategy (Prognosing Labour Market Needs and Skills)”, elaborated by Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and adopted by the government in October 2008, the Labour Ministry further stressed the importance of cooperation of relevant players in provision of lifelong guidance for all citizens and its active participation in achieving goals defined by the Strategy on Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance.

In April 2008, establishing of the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance was initiated by the Ministry of Education to serve as an advisory body for key stakeholders, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Development of the system of lifelong guidance has been included to the measures of the Action Plan Employment, which is one of four action plans that later supplemented the strategy paper Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21, adopted by the government in June 2008. Action plans were also annexed to the National Reform Programme of Slovakia for 2008-2010, approved by the government in October 2008. The National Reform Programme, elaborated in a period of booming, pays a special attention to inclusion into labour market of school graduates, elderly people and long-term unemployed.

The tasks comprise the development of the lifelong guidance system, development of the quality assurance system in lifelong guidance, implementation of the lifelong guidance system, development of legislation for lifelong guidance system. The draft concept for lifelong guidance, elaborated by the working groups of the National Lifelong Guidance Forum, was adopted by the Forum on 2nd February 2009, and subsequently by the gremium of the minister of education on 16th June 2009.

As already detailed above, the ESF means were used for improving quality of guidance and counselling services by national projects, introducing systemic changes.

Development of quality assurance system and implementation of lifelong guidance system due in November 2009 were postponed. The legislation should be developed in 2011.

Weaknesses

Despite a gradual progress in interlinking policies aimed at guidance and counselling, coherence still remains a weak point. It is necessary to support interlinking of activities of counsellors (regular teachers with specific responsibility), counsellors from pedagogical–psychological centres and counsellors from labour offices in order to deliver the best quality information about alternatives of education and training for profession, about competencies and prospects of an individual and about developments on the labour market. Additionally, it is important to strengthen Internet based services and interlink them in order to offer the comprehensive information with a clear guidance towards specialised information and services.

It is expected that the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance created under the impulse of the European Union will master this coordination role, nevertheless, although the National Forum really covers all relevant authorities with high standing officials, further improvement is needed, inclusion of experts knowledgeable about real practice and researchers is inevitable in order to achieve a synergic effect, which can be offered for the development of a political agenda to be implemented under the support of current members of the National Forum

Furthermore, the agreement on proposals of policy paper on lifelong guidance must be translated into practice by coherent activities of all managing authorities responsible for structural funds. It is a pity that the breakdown did not happen in the period of shared activities within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family as the managing authority, and the Ministry of Education as the intermediary body under managing authority. Interlinking of activities under the 2007-2013 Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion and the Operational Programme Education, and in particular progress monitoring of activities within both programmes complemented by joined impact analysis is a precondition for achieving effective results and prevention from fragmentation of services. Client centeredness, well understood in the theory, needs the sophisticated infrastructure producing quality information, well targeted and easy accessible for users. A lack of experience in anticipation of skill needs and forecasting trends in employment is among the most sensitive weak points.

The policy progress focused on improving guidance and counselling is discussed in details in the part on lifelong learning in chapter 3.1.

5.3 Active citizenship

Active citizenship embeddedness in VET curricula

The 1989 revolution and the subsequent double transformation of the society was accompanied by two ultimate features translating into curricula – transition to market economy induced changes in all parts of curriculum referring to economy, and urgently put on the table entrepreneurship and development of competences related to it. Transition to democracy also induced changes in curricula, in particular in Civic Education, and it urgently put on the table the issues of participative democracy and a new vision of citizenship. It is clear that in contrast to former case the latter case is even much more demanding. In contrast to bonuses for successful entrepreneurship, immediately indicated by the success on the

market, there is no similar, easy to see and easy to understand indicator for successful citizenship.

There is no doubt that active citizenship is well embedded in VET curricula. A “Standard of Secondary VET”, developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education and approved by the Ministry of Education in 2002, with the intention to assist in redesigning curriculum and employing competence based approach, explicitly indicated six new key competences, among which “ability to be a democratic citizen” was listed as the sixth competence.

A curricular reform backed by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. has introduced the decentralisation in curriculum development. Since the 2008/2009 school year, all schools have to prepare their own curriculum, based on a framework set by the state. Within state educational programmes, offering this framework for respective VET study and training branches, active citizenship is addressed in detail.

In the part related to key competences, a competence “to be a democratic citizen” is introduced by general explanation, followed by 19 detailed items for ISCED 3A, 4A and 5B, 14 items for ISCED 3C and 10 items for ISCED 2C programmes, describing the relevant knowledge, skills or attitudes of graduates to be achieved. It is up to schools how they achieve the aforementioned goals, and to what extent they rely on the specific subject Civic Education with a long tradition in the Slovak education system, or to what extent they consider this a cross-curricular issue.

Citizenship in practice

It is very well understood by all sensitive practitioners that it is impossible to understand citizenship as a subject matter only addressed within the classroom instruction. It happened very early in the 1990s that thanks to NGOs participative democracy, activities affecting young people in schools, individually or as a group of pupils/students in schools, were introduced, and many schools learnt how to participate in projects, turning the classroom practice into activities going beyond school walls. Furthermore, new active citizenship education also materialised into the dramatic change in school polity environment, introducing self-governing bodies containing students in higher education and secondary schools.

Establishment of student councils is currently backed by § 26 of Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government. This act itself can guarantee neither the performance of self-governing functions per se in an appropriate way, nor the occurrence of favourable environment for learning process necessary for the development of skills inevitable for active citizenship. Nevertheless, in contrast to many other issues, schools were not left alone in this field, and in addition to own independent support from non-governmental bodies, there has been a strong support from the public education sector authority (see the example below). *Iuventa*, an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education with the responsibility towards state youth policy, is also contributing to successful networking in this field. As visible from its website (www.iuventa.sk) and its links to other players, a dedicated group of professionals and volunteers is at work in this field. Assistance to practitioners is offered by promotion of new activities, but also by institutional assistance, as e.g. the accreditation of educational activities by the Accreditation Commission for Specialised Activities in the Work with Youth set by Act No. 282/2008 Coll. on the Work with Youth, or by promotion of grants, i.a. the calls of the Ministry of Education for applying

for support from the family of 2008-2013 ADAM programmes (abbreviation stands for “Activities for Children and Youth”).

The Youth Council of Slovakia (www.rms.mladez.sk) is an umbrella organisation of children and youth organisations established in 1990, uniting organisations with various targets, regardless of political, religious, national and ethnic status. The Council publishes the newspaper “Zoom-M (Zooming at Youth)” aiming at the work with children and youth. A specialised journal issue No. 2/2009 focused on active citizenship (http://archiv.mladez.sk/buxus/docs/upload_priloha/Zoom_2_2009.pdf).

The Intenda Foundation, established by the Student Council of Higher Education Institutions of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education and the Youth Council of Slovakia, focuses on the support of active participation of young people in public life, on strengthening community cohesion and citizen identity, and it also assists active citizenship development through its dedicated website (www.intenda.sk).

As a rule, all promoted activities and manuals are accompanied by orientation activities, training of teachers and student school councils tutors (the so-called coordinators). Iuventa is responsible for this kind of training in cooperation with relevant regional players, as set by a policy paper and also documented by the example below. Furthermore, in-service teacher training institution, the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, with dependences in all regions, is responsible for training of teachers teaching subjects with the highest relevance to the development of active citizenship. In addition to training supported within traditional in-service training, there are also new opportunities cofinanced from the ESF, in particular by the national project “Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes”, conducted by the State Institute of Vocational Education, aimed at a shift from education content based curriculum to competence based curriculum. As already mentioned above, active citizenship development is listed among key competences within state educational programmes, and therefore it must be further addressed within school educational programmes. Thus, multipliers trained within this project and expected to train further the teachers and other curriculum designers working on the refinement of already developed school educational programmes, will also have to deal with translation of “active citizenship” from subject content to respective competences.

Strengths

In contrast to VET per se, the European discourse on youth policies is better reflected. Recommendations resulting from the international experience seem to be better implemented in practice, better backed by authorities, supported by better developed polity and better interlinked with research.

The research in this field is much more developed and Slovak researchers are much more involved in the international activities compared to VET itself. Iuventa and authorities systematically cooperate with the Slovak Youth Research Society (www.syrs.org) and the Centre for European and Regional Youth Studies (CERYs) at the University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. In addition to promotion of new research activities at www.iuventa.sk/index.php?www=program_detail&id_program=32, an archive of completed research activities is maintained at www.vyskummladeze.sk in support of continuity in research.

A reflection of European Youth agenda is for a long term visible from the policy papers prepared under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. A currently valid policy paper “Key Areas and Action Plans of State Policy in Relation to Children and Youth in Slovakia for 2008-2013” was adopted by the government on 26th March 2008. Supporting democracy in education, in particular through strengthening of the role of student self-governance and student school councils, is explicitly stated under the point 4.1.4. Within the subsequently elaborated detailed Action Plan adopted by the government on 6th May 2009, strengthening the student councils role has to be achieved, according to Measure 1.2, by the following activities to be backed by the Ministry of Education and Juventa:

- provision of training programmes for council coordinators;
- continuing in training of activists assisting in supporting student school council activities in cooperation with regional players;
- cooperation with secondary school directors in order to increase the awareness of importance of functioning student school councils in support of democracy.

Furthermore, two self-governing regions were identified as pilots for deepened activities and monitoring their impact. The Trnava Self-Governing Region benefiting from the cooperation with the University of SS Cyril and Methodius should pilot strengthening political participation of youth by embedding respective measures into secondary school practice and by strengthening the networking of student school councils and other regional youth organisations. The Žilina Self-Governing Region should pilot possibilities to improve student school councils functioning by means of a special grant “Student School Councils – Engines of Civic Society Development”.

A new manual to assist educators–coordinators of student school councils should be prepared (for detailed information on the assistance for these coordinators see the example below). A dedicated portal www.ziackeskolskerady.sk (containing the name “student school councils” in this address) is in the process of creation to offer a national platform for student school councils and individuals, students, coordinators and experts active in this field. The importance of strengthening cooperation of regional players is very well recognised within this portal offering a place for creation of regional sub-portals.

Weaknesses

The ability of students to participate in the political life of their schools is still considered insufficient. The 2005 sociological survey “Student School Councils: Non-formal Education for Democracy”, conducted by CERYs, is worth mentioning. Studying the attitudes towards student school council activities, the following was found: 75-80 % of students were informed about the council’s existence and activities, however, only 30 % participated at elections, and only 11 % stood as candidates in elections. When categorising respondents from secondary schools and higher education institutions with regard to their relation to political participation, only 8.2 % of secondary students and 9.7 % of higher education students were identified as “hard core organisers” understanding the importance of political participation, actively contributing to self-governance in schools. Not surprisingly, it corresponds with the insufficient participation in political, social and cultural life of Slovak citizens who had to fight hard with the impact of society transformation in the 1990s and early 2000s, and strengthening the citizenship identity has been subordinated to everyday life concerns. A political life in Slovakia suffers from low participativeness of citizens and insufficient accountability of political players visible at all levels of political life. Political passivity widely spread among citizens can also be documented by the EU27 lowest participation rate

in 2009 elections into the European Parliament (19.64 %), only slightly increasing compared to 16.97 % in 2004.

Despite the focused activities with coherence much higher than in other fields, improvement must be achieved particularly in the following:

- All policies and measures identified at the central government level cannot be translated into practice without participation of all regional players. Support for networking and cooperation of key players in regions is inevitable for local and individual success, in particular in underdeveloped regions suffering from economic lagging;
- A professional status of student school council coordinators must be strengthened and the continuing professional development of teachers and trainers from secondary schools recognised and rewarded within the newly introduced continuing professional development and in-service training model by Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Support for and the development of student school councils</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>A Student School Council is defined by Act No. 596/2003 Coll. as a representative of students of school advocating their interests against school director and school management. The need for adoption of this law resulted from the need to allow comparison of views of more recipients of school services, in particular parents and students, on school environment. Exchanges of views should lead to reconciling the needs and requirements of all actors, as well as increasing the quality of the school environment. Another reason was the intention to make a school a place where students can learn democratic principles and democratic functioning in the environment natural for them, however, replicating a real society (rules, leadership, influencing, negotiating, etc.).</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>The aforementioned law anticipated that student self-governing bodies will be established at all schools. This possibility (however not an obligation) was also given to basic schools. The establishment of student councils was supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of methodological guides; - the design and delivery of training programmes focused on members of student councils, teachers and lecturers. <p>(c) Target groups</p> <p>The target group is composed predominantly of students of secondary schools, but also teachers and school management. To some extent, the measure has an impact on operation of local and regional self-governing authorities, as the establishment of schools is under their responsibility.</p>

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

In 2009, student school councils were established at 90 % of secondary schools. Similar bodies with different names are also functioning at basic schools; nevertheless, the exact statistical data are not available.

1. Methodological materials to support student school councils

The establishment and functioning of councils was supported by several manuals. The publication “This is too of Our Concern - a Guide for Founders of Student School Councils” was issued by Iuventa and the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education in 2005. The manual reflects the results of the survey on participation at secondary schools, conducted after adoption of the law. It focuses predominantly on students, and it provides easy-to-understand information on aims, tasks and responsibilities of student school councils, guidelines for their establishment, and examples of fundamental documents (statute). A new edition, which will also include new topics is under preparation.

The publication “Third Wave: Professional Support for Student School Councils“, published by Iuventa in 2006, was intended for educators serving as tutors (called coordinators) of student school councils in their own schools. Their tasks include provision of information, motivation, assessment, coaching, and serving as spokesmen and facilitators between the council and the school management. The publication focuses in particular on the election process and preparation of students and teachers for elections.

The latest publication “A Year with Student School Council“, to be published by Iuventa is intended for educators – coordinators of student school councils. In addition to information on legislation and experience from current practice, it also provides theoretical basis on youth participation and activities, and forms and levels of council development. The publication highlights two main tasks of coordinators, motivation and assessment. The main part addresses development of key council’s responsibilities, like representation, teamwork, communication, presentation, facilitation, fundraising and programming. The publication also deals with development of regional student self-government and the links of student school councils activities to town and municipality policies.

2. Training focused on student school councils, teachers, members and lecturers

Iuventa has been supporting developments in this field since 2005. In 2005-2006 the pilot training of student school councils was delivered via Regional Youth Centres in Banská Bystrica, Trenčín and Košice. Nevertheless, this system has shown that it is not possible to develop the status and recognition of student self-government from outside. The group of external lecturers established in 2007 developed a training programme for coordinators of student school councils (accredited by the Ministry of Education). The module was introduced in 2007. 150 teachers participate at training yearly. Activities are financed through Iuventa.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The measure is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

Despite the measure has been implemented in the earlier period, it is in line with the current

educational reform. It is reflecting the need for improving democratic processes in education, as well as the efforts towards fostering evidence based youth policy and interlinking this policy with practice and research. Following the Action Plan for 2004, the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education carried out a survey on situation in student self-government in secondary schools, and Iuventa organised methodological-educational events aimed at explaining the importance of participation of young people at school self-government.

An expert group consisting of researchers, policy makers and practitioners was created to complete this task. The activities included e.g. a meeting of civic education teachers with coordinators of student school councils at secondary schools (2004), an e-mail based survey among students and teachers of VET schools focused on student school councils issues (2004), eight focused meetings of students in regional capital cities (2004), national conferences of student school council representatives “This is too of Our Concern I and II” (2005 and 2007), a sociological survey “Student Participation at School Self-Government”, two publications “Civic Deficit in Youth” and “Do we Learn Democracy at School?”. A manual “This is too of Our Concern” was published in 2006 to support development of student self-government. In 2006-2008, Iuventa began to provide first training programmes for student activists of student school councils through the Regional Youth Centres in Košice, Banská Bystrica, Trenčín, etc.

A group of lecturers was created under the supervision of Iuventa to train coordinators of student school councils. A manual for coordinators “The Third Wave” was published in 2007 and in the same year, the group of experts and professionals from Iuventa prepared a training module accredited by the Ministry of Education. 105 teachers and 126 coordinators were trained in 2007 and 2008, respectively. In 2009, a follow-up training model for coordinators was finalised and prepared for accreditation. A tendency to join student school councils and their representatives in respective towns within the activities of the so-called Youth Parliaments has proven important and thus the project of the “Slovak Secondary School Parliament” (an organisation gathering student school councils) was supported in 2008.

Since 2007, the “ADAM” granting programme has been providing the financial support for activities for children and youth. The means are intended to cover training of teams, as well as the cooperation among student school councils and between councils and respective towns. Student school councils are eligible applicants.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education - Department of Children and Youth;
- Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education;
- Iuventa (recently renamed Iuventa – Slovak Youth Institute);
- Regional Youth Institute;
- A group of external lecturers focused on student self-government issues;
- Individual researchers.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The findings of Iuventa and the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education show that student school councils exist, but their standard and activities they focus on differ from one council to another. A coordinator’s personality plays a vital role in motivating council members for activities, from acting as organisers of cultural and sporting life to genuinely

representatives of students advocating their interests against school management.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

The number of student school councils at secondary schools increased from 35 % in 2005 to 50 % in 2007. Currently, student school councils are established at 90 % of secondary schools, regional organisations of student councils have been established in two regions (Prešov and Košice) as partners of regional self-governments in youth policy issues. Both groups consider establishing civic associations.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

The issue of participation and the special support for student school council activities were included among priority themes of the ADAM granting programme of the Ministry of Education, which provides student councils with the possibility to receive funds to cofinance their activities.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Resistance of school managements was observed at the beginning of the implementation of this measure. Gradually, also under the influence of introductory activities (questionnaire based surveys, focused groups, professional research, offers for trainers of coordinators, conference), student school councils have emerged at most of secondary schools. School directors gradually started to provide coordinators with a leave enabling them to participate at training programmes. Initially, the regional dimension of these activities was considered a problem, nevertheless, Regional Youth Centres (in those regions where they exist) became quite soon familiar with this agenda and now they provide for conditions for communication among regional self-governments and regional representatives of student school councils (in the Prešov, Košice, Banská Bystrica, Trenčín Regions).

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The status of student school council coordinators and the reflection of their activities in their workload or remuneration for work have yet to be resolved, similarly to carrier counsellors or anti-drugs coordinators who are included in the new act focused on career development of teachers.

5. Source, legend

Iuventa website: www.iuventa.sk

Publications with a focus on participation, issued by Iuventa:
www.iuventa.sk/index.php?www=sp_detail&id=116

6. Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET

6.1 Improving the quality of VET

Improving the quality of IVET

The IVET system is dominantly based on a traditional quality assurance mechanisms – responsibility for quality assigned by law to respective players (e.g. director of school, establisher, Ministry of Education) and the supervision by the State School Inspection.

VET schools and school establishments (e.g. centres of practical training) are accredited by the formal input assessment procedure. The already established schools just need to stick to state educational programmes. In the process of their registration into the network of schools and school establishments, new schools (including private and church affiliated) are subjected to the formal assessment of compliance of their application (and documents enclosed) with conditions required by law, including the compliance of their school educational programme with respective state educational programme.

Traditional efforts to improve the quality of education were, however, conducted and a reform of school leaving examination is worth mentioning to demonstrate this kind of measure (see the example of initiative below).

The decentralisation of curriculum development, introduced by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll., can be seen as a promising precondition for improving the quality of IVET. A positive feature of the new regulation is that both the obligatory framework set by state educational programmes and the autonomously elaborated school educational programmes have to be issued after the discussion with employers. This is for the first time explicitly required by law. This stipulation can prevent from failures in programming caused by a lack of reflection of labour market needs and substantially contribute to improving the quality. Furthermore, Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET harmonised the legislation regulating activities of chambers of commerce, the Slovak Chamber of Agriculture and Food, the Slovak Chamber of Foresters, the Slovak Mining Chamber, the Slovak Chamber of Trades, and stipulated that they can participate in programming and evaluating IVET (e.g. by delegation of representatives to school-leaving examination commissions at VET schools). Professional chambers are explicitly named as bodies cooperating with the Ministry of Education in improving the quality of IVET. All these changes, however, are not about the introduction of quality instruments per se.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education is performed (besides schools and school establishments themselves) by the State School Inspection, according to § 154(7)b of Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. This performance is based on the annual plans approved by the Chief School Inspector and results of annual supervisions are published in reports on the status of education and upbringing.

Both of these mechanisms are inherent to the education system and quality checking activities are dominantly aimed at the assessment of students' performance in educational terms and in compliance with the legislation and regulations of sectoral authorities. Significantly, the State School Inspection has also to review the compliance of school educational programmes with state educational programmes. This can be, however, seen as deterioration of the State

School Inspection position and a decline from the philosophy set after 1989 to strictly distinguish between the responsibility for monitoring education process and the responsibility for education/learning results. The newly gained responsibility of the State School Inspection to review school educational programmes and their compliance with state educational programmes seems to be a step in opposite direction. The impact of this measure cannot be assessed so far due to the short period after coming in force, nevertheless, it also indicates a lack of attention paid to the implementation of genuine quality assurance mechanism.

On the contrary, establishment of National Institute for Certified Measurement in Education (NÚCEM) is a positive step introduced by the 2008 Education Act, as this institute is responsible for monitoring and assessment of education quality by means of standardised tests. This institute is responsible for national student assessment programmes in the final year of ISCED 2 and ISCED 3A education and the diverse international programmes (e.g. PISA, TALIS, SITES, etc.). These assessments, however, target only general subjects results. There are no national assessment programmes focusing on vocational subjects.

The first impulse to address quality management from the institutional point of view came from the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 9/2006 Coll. on the Structure and Content of Reporting on Educational Activities, Outcomes and Conditions of School and School Facilities. It introduced obligatory annual reporting to the public and softly pushed schools to declaration of mission statements and self-evaluation. Nevertheless, no strong accountability inducing mechanism has been implemented and no national policy on quality management adopted. Reviewing these annual reports indicates a need to train school managements in performance of self-evaluation processes. A new ESF project “External Evaluation of School Quality Facilitating Self-Evaluation Processes and School Development”, launched in 2009 and conducted under the surveillance of the State School Inspection, should therefore elaborate know-how to support schools in self-evaluation, as well as to improve current know-how in quality monitoring of the state inspection.

It is worth stressing that in contrast to the earlier ESF programming period, the quality management is addressed extensively in the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education. Promotion of school quality management systems, including supporting development of models for evaluation and self-evaluation, has been for the first time explicitly stressed and operationalised in the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education within Priority Axis 1, Measure 1.1 “Transformation of Traditional School into a Modern One”. Similarly, promotion of quality culture in higher education institutions has been stressed in Measure 1.2 “Higher Education Institutions and Research & Development as the Driving Forces in the Development of a Knowledge-Based Society”.

Surprisingly, however, even within the 2004-2006 ESF programming period, within which quality assurance was not seen a priority, some schools decided to adopt the quality management system and they received the ISO norm 9001:2000 certificate. The ESF project “Quality of School – Guarantee of the Regional Schooling Reform”, conducted since 5th September 2006 to 30th September 2008, accumulated the experience that could be transferred to other schools provided the backing for dissemination is offered.

Improving quality of CVET/LLL

In CVET and training for the labour market, quality control has been left purely on the market forces and a feedback from clients. Despite several calls for the introduction of certification of providers and certification of lecturers/trainers the only official quality

checking mechanism is bound with the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Further Education accrediting respective educational activities (courses). Such accreditation, although not obligatory for entering the market, was originally demanded by law for the labour market training funded by labour offices. Since the 2004 amendment of the Employment Services Act by Act No. 191/2004 Coll., it is up to labour offices, whether they insist on this accreditation or not.

CVET provided by secondary schools and higher education institutions within formal education follows the same quality assurance mechanisms as applied in IVET and LLL programmes derived from IVET are subjected to accreditation procedures by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Further Education.

There is little known about enterprise training as there is no public research about this segment of VET, and relevant private surveys usually conducted on private request are too specific and/or made available just for clients. It is likely that there is a wide variety of approaches corresponding to the firm culture in case of large enterprises and depending on day-to-day conditions in case of small enterprises.

There are institutions where QMS were implemented and strictly applied. E.g. VUJE a.s., an engineering company that performs design, supply, implementation, research and training activities, particularly in the field of nuclear and conventional power generation, offers training to obtain qualification for nuclear plant technician positions certified according to ISO norm 9001. This training is internationally recognised and foreign specialists are trained there, too.

A focus on improving quality assurance was expected from the new legislation on LLL. Originally, the implementation of QMS has been suggested as a precondition of accreditation and had to be documented within the application for accreditation. This was finally not embedded in the new Act on LLL. Instead, only the reporting on the assessment of education programme by participants is required. According to the Decree of the Ministry of Education such an assessment should focus on the quality of content, in particular, whether it was up to date, on the quality of trainers, equipment and overall organisation. In contrast to the previous accreditation practice, even this little step can be seen as a promising improvement.

Strengths and weaknesses of the policy approach

Although there were several initiatives opening room for the discussion about quality management, no relevant measures have been translated into practice and no national quality model has been developed.

The quality management system, originally promoted within the ESF project “Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the Labour Market”, and reflected in the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, has not been accepted for inclusion into Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. A gradual approach in introduction of changes prevailed. This law at least detailed and refined the recent accreditation procedure concerning educational programmes and expanded the Accreditation Commission activity. It is now also responsible for the accreditation of institutions for validation and recognition of learning outcomes, based on the specific examining resulting in awarding partial or full qualification. The main improvement of this act is related to validation and recognition of prior learning and working practice in the

relevant field. The option to acquire a partial qualification is, however, an important step forward under Slovak conditions. At the same time, exactly this makes a need for rethinking the quality assurance in VET more acute. Furthermore, a renewal of the National System of Qualifications initiated by the Act on Lifelong Learning and to be supported by the ESF project “National System of Qualifications in the Context of Continuing Education Supported by Guidance and Counselling System”, to be conducted by Academia Istropolitana since summer 2010, will again lead to highlighting the importance to reflect the quality assurance.

The Common Quality Assurance Framework remained for a long time just a theoretical concept with no impact on practice. Slovakia even did not participate in European quality assurance networking. Quality assurance relevant international experience is related to bottom up initiatives. Similarly to the 2004-2006 ESF period, within which quality assurance was not explicitly targeted by ESF, but some secondary schools in eastern Slovakia received ISO norm 9001:2000 certificate (see the example below) within the measure targeting qualifications and adaptability of employees, there is again only a bottom up activity to report. A Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project “Quality and Evaluation in School Development” (see the example below), coordinated by the Commerce School in Prešov (eastern Slovakia) at least put this topic on the table and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework has been reflected as a basis for the quality improvement in VET.

European initiatives on quality assurance in vocational education and training were insufficiently reflected due to the lack of experts in quality assurance and the Ministry of Education determination to rely on traditional approaches based on traditional instruments. Although the Ministry of Education decided to financially support entering the ENQA-VET network (among last countries in autumn 2008), no conditions for active participation were created for the State Institute of Vocational Education. Thus, Slovakia continued to be very passive in studying the EU experience in quality management. The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework is insufficiently known, similarly to the earlier European activities, as CQAF. Significantly, the Slovak Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET was not presented in the dedicated portal of this network in Spring 2010.

The 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education seems to indicate a turning point. The non-existence of national quality management system was expressed a weak point and the introduction of QMS in all segments of VET, regional schooling, higher education and CVET/LLL indicated an explicit goal to be achieved. The promotion of school quality management systems, including the support for the development of models for evaluation and self-evaluation, seems to be supported in the future and the State School Inspection was assigned a national project that should inter alia capitalise from the international experience. Hopefully, this project will also bring an impulse for further studying of common quality criteria and indicative descriptors, as well as the reference set of selected quality indicators for assessing quality in VET, annexed to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET.

Examples of initiatives

1. Title of policy measure

A new model of ISCED 3A “maturita” school leaving examination

A new model has been implemented since the 2004/2005 school year, legislatively backed

by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 510/2004 Coll. Since 2005 to 2008, ESF projects were used for training pedagogical staff to adjust to new school leaving exams in both general and VET ISCED 3A studies.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

A previous fully school-based model, with teachers in a double role - educators and examiners, was considered untenable because of not comparable assessment (marking) between schools, gradually leading to softening quality standards.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The “maturita” reform has been aimed at increasing reliability and validity of assessment. The key objective is to provide for valid, nation-wide comparable information for all students, parents, employers and subsequent education providers, predominantly higher education institutions.

The most important changes are as follows:

- Introduction of two-component examination, internal - similar to original “maturita” and external based on standardised tests;
- There are three levels of “maturita” commissions (central/national, school, subject) introduced, with significant representation of external examiners and out of school experts. The subject “maturita” commission is now composed of three subject specialists, headed by a regional authority, assigned professional coming outside the respective school. The homeroom teacher is not the commission member anymore and the teacher who used to teach the respective subject is not necessarily a member of the commission either. The members of the commission are appointed by the head of school. In VET schools a delegate of the professional chamber may become a standing member of the commission provided he/she meets relevant professional requirements. An additional expert from the field, even without VET experience, might be invited to join the commission, however, without the right to assess;
- The examination at VET schools includes the so-called vocational component, which consists of theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part includes 25 comprehensive topics overarching the knowledge of all vocational subjects in a respective study programme and the practical part includes up to 15 topics.

(c) Target groups

Students and teachers of secondary schools

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The new model of “maturita” school leaving examination was introduced by adopting the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 510/2004 Coll. on school leaving at secondary schools and completing training at other educational institutions. The decree was several times amended. The decree was amended several times. In 2010, it was regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 318/2008 Coll. on completing studies at secondary schools complying with the new legislation adopted within the 2008 educational reform. In 2005 standardized tests were only introduced in Mathematics, English and German. The

range has gradually increased and the external component comprised 17 tests in 2010: Six foreign languages (EN, DE, FR, IT, ES, RU) in two versions of difficulty, mother tongue (Slovak, Hungarian or Ukrainian), Slovak language for students with other language of instruction and Mathematics, thus, despite original expectations other subject tests than languages and mathematics are still pending.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The instrument is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is interrelated with policies aimed at decentralisation of curriculum development and with efforts to improve quality checking. In VET schools, it is in line with efforts to strengthen cooperation of schools with businesses. The policy also addressed the traditional school leaving examination questions. Shift towards competence/learning outcomes based programming and assessment was visible also in efforts to set examination topics differently. Implementation of the new “maturita” school leaving examination has been also supported by the ESF projects carried out by the National Institute for Education aimed at designing a catalogue of appropriate tasks and developing standardised tests; and the projects of the National Institute for Education and the State Institute of Vocational Education focused on further training of general and vocational subject teachers for new “maturita” school leaving exams. In case of vocational subject teachers a special attention was paid to the development of comprehensive topics for both theoretical and practical part of exam.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education;
- National Institute for Education;
- State Institute of Vocational Education.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

The policies were annually evaluated and the evaluation reports submitted to the Ministry of Education via Central “Maturita” Commission. Identified proposals of change were implemented and if necessary, the respective decree of the Ministry of Education was amended.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

There were no explicit indicators of success set; evaluation of policy was based on reporting from stakeholders.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

In concord with a new Education Act valid since September 2008, standardised tests will be developed, administered and assessed in the future by a newly established institution National Institute for Certified Measurement in Education. This institution is also responsible for carrying out international measurements Slovakia participates in.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

There were repeatedly difficulties with distribution of tests by professional courier service, as there were reports about violation of confidentiality rules due to early delivery of tests. The problem has been solved only partly. In 2008, each school director had to come to the regional seat and pick up tests in person on the very day of testing. Therefore ICT based centrally administered testing is envisaged and already piloted.

Quality of tests has been permanently questioned. Improvement of the quality of testing was the main reason for establishment of the National Institute for Certified Measurement in Education.

This institute has been established in 2009 by separation of an existing unit from the National Institute for Education and by extending it up to 60 employees.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Learning outcomes/competences based assessment should be further refined within in-service training of teachers. External testing should be extended to more subjects.

5. Source, legend

Ministry of Education of the SR, www.minedu.sk

State Institute of Vocational Education, www.siov.sk

National Institute for Education, www.statpedu.sk

National Institute for Certified Measurement in Education, www.nucem.sk

Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 318/2008 Coll. on completing studies at secondary schools, www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Vyhlasaky/2008_318.pdf

1. Title of policy measure

The ESF project “Quality of School – a Guarantee of the Regional Schooling Reform”
(5th September 2006 to 30th September 2008)

The project addressed various aspects of school quality issues. The main priority was given to securing professional development of pedagogical staff, including increase of foreign language and ICT skills. The example focuses just on a part of the project directly aimed at quality management issues.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

The district where the project is carried out is characterised by a high unemployment rate, a high number of Roma population and a high share of population with completed basic education, which lays increased requirements on the education system. Currently, there has been no system of lifelong learning of teachers focusing on quality of education methodology development. Managers at secondary schools as well as teachers tend to focus on quality of educational outcomes only, and they have neither time nor experience in dealing with quality issues in a comprehensive way. One of the possibilities how to solve this problem is to implement quality management system according to ISO 9001:2000.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

Main aim of the project is to increase the quality of managerial and pedagogical processes at secondary schools and thus to contribute to the reform of regional schools. The following aims were set with regard to the quality issues:

- develop and verify the system of education in quality management of secondary schools and educational processes;
- carry out training in quality management for 60 pedagogues – mainly managers of secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region;
- develop quality guides for secondary schools to acquire a ISO 9001:2000 certificate;
- certify 30 schools and set up consultancy and audit centres at secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region.

(c) Target groups

- Secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region;
- 60 pedagogues, predominantly school managers.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

Since 2006 till September 2007 training of pedagogues was carried out comprising 240 hours in 5 thematic areas (Quality management, Process management, Application of ISO 9001 in practice, Client satisfaction – student, society, parent; Projecting and project documentation). Between May 2007 and May 2008 the training graduates were supposed to elaborate and implement a quality guide for their own schools, which was a prerequisite for awarding certification. Schools meeting criteria were checked and certified by the Slovak certifying authority PQM. In total, PQM awarded certificates to 28 schools compared to 30 schools planned. One school did not meet criteria for awarding a certificate, and one school merged within the project period with another one. 60 participants were awarded a certificate of Quality Manager.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The project is carried out on regional level in the Košice Self-Governing Region.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The demand-driven project was launched within the European Social Fund, the Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 “Increasing the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees and Persons Entering the Labour Market”, Measure 3.2 “Increasing the Scope, Improvement and Broader Provision of Further Education with a View to Improving the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees”.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

30 secondary schools of the Košice Self-Governing Region (6 grammar schools and 24 secondary VET schools) will implement the quality management system and develop quality for certification purposes.

Faculty of Economy of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Department of Management and Marketing) provided training and awarded certificates to trainees.

PQM, s.r.o., the Slovak certifying authority accredited by the Slovak National Accreditation Service, is checking the quality management system, existence of functioning quality system, and issues ISO 9001:2000 certificates to schools.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Schools with the established quality management system were subject to subsequent certification audit. Successful recertification and functioning quality management systems proves the long-term impact of the project.

Most of schools indicate the project benefits as follows:

- making activities within processes more transparent and procedures simplified;
- making work of school management and teachers more effective;
- making monitoring and evaluation of student, parent and staff satisfaction more intensive, which lead to the permanent increase of quality in education;
- raising school awareness.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

- Number of schools awarded the ISO 9001:2001 certificate in the field “Educational activities”: 28, of which 19 secondary specialised schools, 2 commercial schools, 1 secondary health school and 6 grammar schools;
- Number of pedagogues trained: 60;
- Number of consulting and audit centres set up at secondary schools in the Košice Self-Governing Region: 28

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The results should contribute to the reform of regional schools and support dissemination of quality culture in regional schools. Particularly valuable is a high share of secondary VET schools interested in quality management. Slovakia’s joining ENQA-VET was expected to create conditions for successful implementation of quality management within the ESF

Operational Programme Education projects in the 2007-2013 programming period. Nevertheless, current participation of Slovakia in EQARF is still insufficient.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Training took place in concord with the project's deadlines; however, the schedule for schools' certification had to be adjusted, as it was not possible for the certifying authority selected within the public procurement procedure to carry out certification audits at all 30 schools within one month. That's why the certification audits started in May 2007 and gradually carried out at schools ready for certification (i.e. with completed documentation and elaborated quality guide).

Sustainability of the project's outcomes has been secured. Each school that wishes to retain the ISO 9000:2001 certificate has to constantly improve its quality management system, and has to be a subject to yearly certification audits. As resulted from negotiations with the Department of Education of the Košice Self-Governing Region, financial sources enabling schools to undergo recertification audits are covered from the region's budget.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Similarly to other ESF projects refinancing expenditures was too slow. The project closing was planned for June 2008, nevertheless, due to missing financial means a final conference had to be shifted to September 2008.

5. Source, legend

Project coordinator (Grammar School Rožňava), <http://gymrv.edupage.org/>

Implementing the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)

As already mentioned there is no national policy aimed at implementation of EQARF, but there is an example of relevant bottom up initiative.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

The Leonardo da Vinci project "Quality and Evaluation in the Process of School Development (QEPSE)"
(Transfer of Innovation, No. LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-SK-73100826)

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

It is a result of the coincidence of interest of school and its active management in international cooperation, the Leonardo da Vinci systemic promotion of Copenhagen process and the interest of international partners in transferring their experience. A typical example of import of international know-how within the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The main objective of the project was to exploit possibilities for making use of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) to enhance the quality of vocational education and training in Slovakia. The specific goals included the development of the quality of the skills of teachers and managers in VET, development of quality indicators, establishing the culture of feedback, development of teaching/learning materials to support the process of evaluation and the quality increase.

Transfer of innovations included the exploitation of the results of the previous LdV project coordinated by the Lithuanian partner, practical experience of partners from Lithuania and Germany and handbooks developed by Cedefop – “European common quality assurance framework” and “European Guide on Self-Assessment for VET Providers”.

(c) Target groups

- Teacher and managers of Commercial School in Prešov and Secondary Specialised School of Trade and Services in Prešov;
- Students of Commercial School in Prešov and Secondary Specialised School of Trade and Services in Prešov.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The project was launched in 2007. Since then background documents have been prepared, including translations of Cedefop's handbooks and materials produced by project partners related to transfer of innovation (especially focusing on training of external experts in quality assessment). A package of materials and instruments have been developed and adjusted for the implementation in VET in Slovakia, such as the quality handbook for implementing EQARF for VET in Slovakia, the training programme for experts in quality assessment, a handbook for experts in quality assessment, guidelines for trainers of experts, etc. After transformation of all regional methodological-pedagogical centres into one institution, the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre (MPC) with the head office in Bratislava (see e.g. chapter 7.2), MPC in Trenčín was not an independent legal body anymore and it was replaced in the project by Secondary Specialised School of Trade and Services in Prešov. The project included utilisation of instruments within the internal school evaluation at both schools and the external school evaluation at the Commercial School, carried out in 2009.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

The project was carried out at the Commercial School and Secondary Specialised School of Trade and Services in Prešov, nevertheless, its results will be widely disseminated, and developed instruments can be offered to all interested.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

It is an isolated case of one active private VET school and the support of additional school and other participating authorities for activity of these schools.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure)

Commercial School in Prešov, dissemination partners - the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre in Trenčín, replaced by Secondary Specialised School of Trade and Services in Prešov, Department of School Education and Culture of the Prešov Self-Governing Region, State School Inspection Centre in Prešov, and foreign partners from Germany, Lithuania and Denmark.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available)

Products were delivered, but it is too early to assess the impact.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

A success depends on the sustainability sensitive to the support of the school managers and to support of the establisher.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

It is hoped that the Office of Self-Governing Region participating in the project will support dissemination within the Prešov Region. It is a founder of all public VET school in the region, and therefore, it is a promising promoter of such dissemination.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

As already mentioned, it is an activity of a private VET school. There is no history of CQAF and EQARF related policies in Slovakia. Thus, this school is a front-runner.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

National EQARF reflecting policies and nation-wide support are to be addressed. Alternatively, the Prešov Region can serve as a sort of pilot region for implementation of this policy.

5. Source, legend

Project coordinator (Commercial School in Prešov) www.oa-po.sk/qepse.html
www.qepse.eu

6.2 Promoting excellence in VET

Policy progress focused on excellence – Pilot regional centres of VET and centres of excellence in higher education

A long period of underfinancing education resulted in erosion of quality standards in secondary and tertiary VET, in particular affecting costly activities. Thus, as a rule, practical training activities were reduced in the amount of hours of provision in the input and the quality of schools in the output. With a revival of economy, employers heavily criticised the quality of graduates and the sector most sensitive to the shortage of the quality labour force initiated structural changes resulting in the introduction of the new act. Although originally not planned, the Ministry of Education accepted the pressure of employers, in particular of the automotive industry, and after a comparably short period of two years, the parliament adopted Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training on 23rd April 2009. This act came in force since 1st September 2009. The act provides legislative backing for revolutionary change in responsibility sharing towards IVET. Setting up centres of vocational education and training is among tools to enhance the quality of VET. Although not named as centres of excellence they are in fact envisaged as leading regional VET centres promoting excellence in respective sector related VET. The status of the centre of VET can be assigned to a secondary specialised school, centre of practical training, school farm or centre of vocational practice provided it cooperates with respective professional organisation, it is equipped with modern material and technical equipment, and it delivers VET for respective occupations. Professional organisation must take a decision upon the establishment of centre of VET upon the approval of establisher. Thus, no centre can be supported by regional authorities without the support of respective professional organisation.

The establishment of VET centres was included into the legislation based on the experience of two initiatives:

- The initiative of the Association of Automotive Industry, the Guild of Motor Trades and Repairs, led to establishment of 13 pilot centres for motor trades and repairs areas in 2003;
- The ESF project "Centres for VET and information - a base for adjusting education to labour market requirements" resulting in setting up 6 centres in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region focused on construction, electrical engineering, engineering, food processing, retail and services, and chemistry areas.

The intention was to transform centres set up within both initiatives into centres of VET according to the Act on VET, and also to stimulate the establishment of centres of VET in other regions. In the Košice Self-Governing Region, 5 centres of VET have started their operation since 2nd September 2009. They are focused on engineering, electrical engineering, informatics, tourism, hotels, construction, metallurgy, art crafts. Establishment of additional centres is in preparation. In the Žilina Region, the ESF project "Pilot centres of VET in the Žilina Self-Governing Region" has been carried out focused on engineering, construction, forestry and electrical engineering. These pilot centres will operate in future as centres of VET. Centres should serve students and teachers of respective schools as well as schools that deliver the same or similar branches of study. Teachers of such schools should be served by these centres within in-service teacher training. Centres will also provide services to other interested groups (and other employers in addition to those contributing financially to their equipment) within lifelong learning focused especially on increasing qualification, but also on changing current qualification, and within training for the labour market offered in cooperation with labour offices. It is expected that in cooperation with employers the centres will have at disposal the most advanced material equipment and highly qualified staff, which

will enable them to deliver high-quality education, and respond as flexibly as possible to labour market needs, including requirements of incoming investors to regions. The role of centres of VET is not just to deliver the best quality CVET/LLL, but also to monitor the development relevant for future provision of quality CVET/LLL in respective sectors (see the example below).

Establishment of centres of VET can be initiated by professional organisations (that guarantee high-level standard of their equipment and staff) or by self-governing regions responsible for regional VET strategy. Although centres of vocational education and training has been already set up based on cooperation of self-governing regions and employers in some regions considering this policy appropriate, other regions, e.g. the Banská Bystrica Region, while positive towards professional organisation initiatives, are more cautious taking into account risks of conflicts among VET schools selected for upgrading into centres and those not selected in terms of financing and attracting students. While the Košice Region made use of its own resources for better financing VET centres, and in the future all regions can follow the Žilina Region example in exploiting the ESF, sustainable financing of VET centres is undoubtedly a crucial point in regional authorities' decisions.

The ESF plays a leading role in the improvement of the quality provision of VET at the tertiary level. Although the establishment of centres of excellence in higher education institutions, supported by the Operational Programme Research and Development, Priority Axis 2 “Support to Research and Development”, Measure 2.1 “Support of Networks of Excellence in Research and Development as the Pillars of Regional Development and Support to International Cooperation”, and similar Measure 4.1 within Priority Axis 4 “Support to Research and Development in the Bratislava Region”, is not primarily aimed at the provision of VET, the improvement of research and development activities will significantly benefit to the provision of quality VET within the Master and PhD studies.

Strengths and weaknesses

An intervention in support of the improvement of the quality in VET and the increased involvement of employers in VET was urgently needed. A per capita financing scheme within secondary VET based almost exclusively on the state budget with a low engagement of employers led, together with insufficient quality monitoring and a population decline, to deterioration of secondary VET graduates quality, increasing mismatch in the labour market and finally causing dissatisfaction of employers. The Ministry of Education made a pivotal turn under the pressure of employers, and offered to all key players an opportunity to influence VET in all segments and all phases. Equally to many other newly introduced initiatives, the same applies for the establishment of regional VET centres: additional funding and the supply of experts attracted by competitive salaries need to be secured. The Act on VET does not indicate the way how to achieve this. The ESF can offer initial funding, but sustainable solution must be rethought, agreed with employers and backed by legislation. Otherwise, the centres of VET will become very vulnerable to external shocks and sensitive to regional and sectoral short-term development.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure
Establishment of centres of VET in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region
The policy was based on the automotive industry initiative, later expanded and embedded

into the ESF project "Centres for VET and information - a base for adjusting education to labour market requirements" (1st June 2006 to 30th September 2007).

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

The need for establishing "Centres for VET and information" resulted from the increased requirements for effective communication with employers, more flexible responding of VET to labour market needs, and promoting innovations in study and training branches.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The main aim of the project was to establish six centres in the Bratislava Region, covering six sectors (construction, electrical engineering, engineering, food processing, retail and services, and chemistry).

The project's main objectives included:

- initiating cooperation with employers within six sectoral partnerships in development of new educational programmes;
- developing and piloting six tailor-made retraining courses for school graduates;
- training of teachers in designing and management of continuing training programmes;
- an analysis of current situation in VET at secondary schools in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region by respective sectors;
- a survey on employers' requirements on qualified labour force.

The project's measurable targets were related to the centres' tasks. The centres' tasks include e.g.:

- Collecting information on respective groups of study and training branches provided within the region, including lists of specialisations and sub-specialisations, number of students, etc.;
- Communicating with employers and potential investors, neighbouring regions and foreign partners within the sector;
- Collecting information and setting up own libraries and networks of consultants;
- Monitoring new trends in technology in respective branches, communicating with schools and the State Institute of Vocational Education concerning the content of education;
- Monitoring the situation in qualification of teachers and qualified teaching within vocational subjects and practical training;
- Communicating with authors of legislative regulations and commenting on new drafts of laws, decrees, etc.;
- Communicating with the regional labour office and monitoring the situation in unemployment of graduates from respective schools, cooperating with the State Institute of Vocational Education in making changes in composition of study and training branches, and adjusting the content of education to employers' requirements;
- Working on proposals for new professions that could be generated by the labour market in 5 to 10 years, collecting project ideas for new curricula;
- Cooperating with employers and other entities in development of standards for materials and technology equipment in individual branches, as well as with authors of textbooks, teaching/learning aids, etc.;
- Coordinating supply of educational services to the wide public, in particular to firms and enterprises in need of training or retraining their employees;
- Participating in projects, in particular within ESF;
- Creating and maintaining a database of graduates (monitoring their situation on the

<p>labour market), as well as partner organisations and firms in a respective sector;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving public relations, promoting respective study and training branches, etc. <p>(c) Target groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 30 teachers in total in six centres trained in designing and management of continuing training programmes; - 48 graduates participating at tailor-made retraining courses (plus 150 graduates trained 2 years after project's closing); - 1000 students of secondary VET schools indirectly affected by modernised curricula (2 years after project's closing). <p>(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).</p> <p>The ESF project has been completed, however, the policy is continuing as being implemented by the self-governing region. Furthermore, the establishment of sectoral centres has been embedded into new Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET and experience mainstreamed.</p>
<p>2. Policy/measure operation and delivery</p> <p>(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)</p> <p>The project has been implemented in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region. However, one of the original initiatives (centres establishment initiated by the automotive sector) was over-regional, and currently, establishment of similar centres is a national policy.</p> <p>(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?</p> <p>The demand-driven project was carried out within the European Social Fund, Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, Priority 2 “The Development of Lifelong Learning and the Support for Research and Development in the Context of Human Resources Quality Improvement”, Measure 2.1 “Stimulating and Improving the Provision of Education Relevant to Employers and Businesses”.</p> <p>The project was in concord with VET and lifelong learning policies, and it contributed to promoting partnership in VET policy. Now, it is a part of the national policy, which is in progress, backed by legislation.</p> <p>(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure)</p> <p>The ESF project was implemented by the Regional School Office (state administration) in cooperation with the Bratislava Self-Governing Region and six VET schools (pilot centres). Currently, the self-governing region is the main key actor orchestrating the cooperation of all other players including employers. Similarly, other self-governing regions became subsequently key actors in the implementation of this policy, however, in close cooperation with respective sectoral professional organisations.</p>

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

An analysis of current situation in VET at secondary schools in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region and a survey on employers' requirements on qualified labour force were carried out in order to identify appropriate pilot centres and to specify their tasks. The assessment of the impact was based on checking fulfilment of the tasks above, and with regard to indicators of success listed below. No evaluation study has been elaborated so far, however, the impact assessment will be provided within the Self-Governing Region procedure of monitoring policies.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

- Six centres for VET and information established;
- Six sectoral partnerships established;
- Number of teachers trained in designing and management of continuing training programmes: 30;
- Number of graduates completing tailor-made retraining courses: 48.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The results of the analysis of current situation in VET and of a survey on employers' requirements were used in the elaboration of the strategy paper for optimisation of study and training branches in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region. Furthermore, criteria for "upgrading" the regular school establishment to a regional Centre of VET were set based on the experience from this region. The integration of this policy into national policies, covering all regions and sectors, has been backed by newly elaborated Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, and the implementation is in progress nation-wide. Before coming in force of the Act on VET, there were already 13 pilot centres operating in Slovakia in motors trades and repairs area. Since 2nd September 2009, five centres have started their operation in the Košice Self-Governing Region. In the Žilina Region the ESF project "Pilot Centres of VET in the Žilina Self-Governing Region" is carried out focused on engineering, construction, forestry and electrical engineering. It is intended that in the future these pilot centres will operate as centres of VET, corresponding to the Act on VET.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Cooperation with employers is crucial for aligning education with labour market needs. 120 employers information points were envisaged within the project. The experience shows that collecting information from employers will require a period of mutual training. More time is needed to stabilise the information flow and to achieve reliable and valid data.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The financing of centres may appear a weak point of the policy, as establishing and maintaining centres might endanger financing of other "regular" VET schools, provided no specific interventions to prevent from deterioration of financing other VET schools within

the regional network are rethought.

The development of the methodology to collect data on skill needs and other relevant data concerning labour market and VET are also the issues to be addressed nation-wide.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training,
www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/184-2009.pdf

6.3 Higher level qualifications in VET

There is no tradition in provision of ISCED 5B programmes in higher education. Higher education institutions including technical universities – the main providers of tertiary VET, traditionally offered only master and PhD programmes. After implementation of the Bologna declaration, bachelor studies were introduced, and as a consequence, little capacities for further reforming and introduction of ISCED 5B programmes have been in place. ISCED 5B programmes indicated within the UOE statistics include programmes delivered at secondary schools, which are considered equivalent to a short form of tertiary education, however, not classified as tertiary level of education by legislation. A new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. opened the door for the provision of higher professional education awarding a title “DiS – a diploma specialist”, a programme lasting two or three years and open for ISCED 3A graduates. This level of education can be, however, seen as both post-secondary and tertiary, depending on the future regulation of the Higher Education Act, as the respective amendment of Higher Education Act is unlikely to be accepted by the higher education lobby. Higher professional education will remain seen as post-secondary non tertiary level, despite the introduction of the new title and degree. A dilemma accompanied by this must be solved within the renewal of NSQ and its alignment with EQF.

ISCED 5B programmes are currently strongly linked to secondary ISCED 3A programmes and can be seen as an expansion of secondary studies, whenever shorter ISCED 3A programme is insufficient in terms of time needed for achieving respective qualification.

Furthermore, there is no tradition of apprenticeship in secondary VET, not speaking about the apprenticeship in higher education. Nevertheless, there is an increased interest of employers in influencing tertiary graduates' profiles. The automotive industry is again offering an example of a frontrunner. The Association of Automotive Industry has been for a long time cooperating with all technical universities in Slovakia, in particular with regard to accreditation of study programmes needed for the automotive industry. Jozef Uhrík, the president of the Association, is also a member of the Accreditation Commission, established by the government as its advisory body. Thus, new vocational qualification programmes in higher tertiary education adjusted to the automotive industry needs to result from this cooperation, however, they are ISCED 5A rated (offering Bachelor's or Master's degrees) rather than ISCED 5B rated.

It cannot be expected that ISCED 5B programmes will be provided by higher education institutions due to a wide provision of ISCED 5A bachelor studies. A pressure resulting from comprehensive accreditations of higher education institutions pushing on reducing the mass production of graduates might contribute to the emergence of labour market oriented ISCED 5B studies later. Out of 20 assessed public universities twelve universities failed to

meet university status accreditation requirements. They were given a one-year period for elimination of shortcomings. It is expected that three additional institutions will meet requirements and that in total 11 higher education institutions will be recognised as universities in the 2010/2011 academic year, possessing the right to offer all three cycles of study. The rest of former universities will have no right to offer doctoral studies and will be further categorised into two categories: vocational higher education institutions offering only bachelor studies and higher education schools offering bachelor and master studies.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Designing a new study programme “Automotive Production”

On 30th September 2009, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava and Volkswagen Slovakia, a.s. (VW), signed an agreement on cooperation, which includes the development of the new study programme focused on the automotive production and cooperation in research and development. VW will support the project with over EUR 300 000 in the course of three years.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

The development of the new tailor-made study programme resulted from a lack of possibilities for preparation of tertiary educated professionals able to meet specific requirements of the automotive industry. For the first time in Slovakia, a specific university programme will be designed, explicitly focused on training highly qualified graduates for this industry.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

The main aim of VW is to increase the quality of university education in this field, to provide students with knowledge and experience from production of top quality cars, and to involve students and researchers into the research and development of production methods.

(c) Target groups

Students, teachers and researchers of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

In the initial stage, the programme “Automotive Production”, designed in cooperation of the faculty and VW, will be offered as a sub-specialisation within the already accredited bachelor study programme “Production Systems and Quality Management“. First students are to be enrolled in the 2010/2011 academic year. The programme will be delivered in Slovak and partly in English. The study will also include training periods in VW plants, placements and lectures at foreign higher education institutions, like the University of Technology in Braunschweig, AutoUni (private university founded by VW in Wolfsburg,

Germany), the Ingolstadt University of Applied Sciences, etc. Forty students are expected to study in this programme. Graduates will be able to apply for jobs in VW, as well as in other car producing companies.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

The initiative is a result of the partnership between the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava and VW. Nevertheless, the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the graduates during the study will enable them to apply for jobs also in other car producing companies.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The agreement between VW and the faculty will also cover cooperation of partners in international research and educational projects, including placements of young researchers in VW and cooperation in the project “IngA – Engineer in Automotive Industry” focused on seeking talented students with Master’s degrees. Moreover, VW will be a general partner and sponsor (with contribution of EUR 5 000 in this year) of the faculty in the project “Mechanical Engineering Olympiad”, designed for tertiary and secondary students. Until now, over 6 000 students have participated at this Olympiad.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure)

- Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava;
- Volkswagen Slovakia, a. s.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available)

Since the initiative was launched in September 2009 and the delivery of the study programme is planned since the 2010/2011 academic year, no evaluation studies have been elaborated so far.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

The study programme “Automotive Production“ developed and delivered since the 2010/2011 academic year.

Students participating at the bachelor programme: 40

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

Success of this cooperation can also contribute to the progress in formalisation of other cooperation in this sector, e.g. concerning automotive design with the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Since the initiative is at the beginning, it is too soon to report on problems and obstacles encountered.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

It is envisaged that in the future the programme will be jointly designed as the independent accredited programme titled “Euroengineer in the Automotive Industry”.

Partners would like to develop the master study programme delivered since the 2011/2012 academic year, and the international study since 2012/2013.

5. Source, legend

Information on the initiative,

www.volkswagen.sk/sk/tlacove-centrum/tlacove-spravy/2009/univerzity.html

6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems

There were no substantial barriers hampering the switch from one secondary study programme to the other one, as it was fully up to respective schools to agree transfer conditions. All three secondary school streams and two current streams – grammar schools and secondary specialised schools, are regulated by the education sector legislation and maintained under condition strictly regulated by the state. VET schools regardless of their sectoral focus are all secondary schools legislatively equal and all young people in secondary schools have the same legislative status. On the other hand, transfers between study programmes were traditionally very rare, occurring due to insufficient academic skills between grammar schools and VET schools or between ISCED 3A programmes and ISCED 3C programmes rather than due to willingness to change to achieve different qualification. There are no statistical data tracking assertion of the graduates on the labour market, and therefore there are no reliable data about interlinking fields of study and the job subsequently entered. Nevertheless, very loose relations are estimated with high appearance of over-qualification and low correlations between the field of study and the occupation. The weak correlation between qualifications initially acquired and qualifications needed in the labour market is sometimes commented as a natural result of volatility in the labour market and flexibility of graduates in accepting jobs. No measure aimed at improving horizontal permeability is expected in the nearest future. No relevant policy agenda will emerge until the National System of Qualifications is renewed.

As regards vertical permeability, there are no dead end paths from the legislative point of view, with the exception of some streams of special education for handicapped children. ISCED 3C graduates can enter 2-year follow up studies in order to achieve an ISCED 3A “maturita” school leaving certificate entitling them to apply for higher education (without restriction with regard to the future field of study). Thus, even VET programme graduates can apply for social science or humanities, if able to pass the entrance examination (if required) and/or to meet performance requirements during the study. Earlier, possibilities to enter higher education were limited by a surplus of demand over supply in available places.

Currently, entrance to tertiary education is not limited due to the increase of a number of institutions and places offered and due to the population decline. This does not mean that it is possible to enter specific programme at the specific institution, as the most attractive studies at attractive institutions still offer limited amounts of places, but it is possible to find a place in a similar programme in the same or the other institution.

The increase in the number of graduates and the impact of the Bologna reform on the 1st cycle is visible from the table below, comparing in detail the reference years 2002 and 2009.

Table 6.1: Number of graduates in 2002 and 2009

Cycle	2002			2009		
	FT	PT*	Total	FT	PT	Total
1st cycle	2 559	3 941	6 500	23 456	15 692	39 148
2nd cycle	13 797	3 617	17 414	19 052	10 896	29 948
3rd cycle	158	532	690	874	945	1 819

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Notes: annual data as of 31st October

* including foreign students, other data without foreign students

The increase in graduates of 2nd and 3rd cycles, and in particular in part-time studies, documents the improved accessibility to higher education. This improvement is even more visible from the comparison with the last year of the communist regime. There were 9 254 full-time and 966 part-time graduates and 195 full-time foreign student graduates from the former 2nd cycle in 1989. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of part-time students was subject to criticism. The Ministry of Education capped enrolment into part-time studies by regulation allowing for the maximum of 50 % of part-timers from the total number of students, arguing by a lower standard of provision of part-time studies. Moreover, the 2009 comprehensive accreditation benchmarks force higher education institutions seeking for the university status to reduce a number of students (in practice in particular of part-time students in 1st and 2nd cycle).

Strengths and weaknesses

In contrast to the 1980s and partly the 1990s, the access to ISCED 3A and higher levels of education has dramatically improved and the share of students not placed has decreased. In fact, there are no capacity barriers for achieving ISCED 3A and higher level of education. Slovakia traditionally belonged to the best EU countries in a share of ISCED 3 educated in population and comparably a very low share of ISCED 5 educated. This is dramatically changing. Nevertheless, the high permeability of the education system is not accompanied by the counterbalancing measures aimed at the quality and the indication of labour market opportunities for graduates. Many practitioners as well as analysts warn against “degree hunting” and the lowered quality standards.

There were no policies directly aimed at improving the horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training system introduced in IVET in the period 2002 to 2009. Therefore, there are no examples of initiatives to offer for international discussion.

6.5 Teachers and trainers

Initial training of teachers

There are two options how to become a qualified teacher. Thus, there are two traditional training models backed by legislation:

- teacher training programmes;
- non-teacher training programmes complemented by additional pedagogical study.

The two models reflect, in a different way, that teacher qualification is composed of two sets of competences - professional *sensu stricto* (vocational competence with regard to specific branch) and pedagogical, as also stressed in legislation. The former set of competences guarantees subject related proficiency, the latter communication, classroom management and methodology skills.

Teacher training programmes offer comprehensive training interrelating the acquisition of both sets of competences. Teachers in VET teaching general subjects graduate from this model of training. Teacher training based on the second model is a dominant form of training of VET teachers teaching vocational subjects. As a rule, vocational subject teachers entered non-teacher training programmes and they complemented it by additional pedagogical study in order to achieve teaching qualification. They entered specific three to four semester training programmes offered by the university in either simultaneous or consecutive form; the latter is usually offered as a part-time programme.

Teacher training composed of a non-teacher training programme and complementary pedagogical study (CPS) has been subject of strong criticism by experts close to the Accreditation Commission. This criticism, although disputable, has been partly backed by recent changes in legislation. The changes affecting teacher training programmes, as a consequence of the Bologna process, are as follows: Study programmes and study plans were rewritten in accordance with the requirements of the newly issued list of fields of studies and the framework description prepared by the Accreditation Commission. A list of the fields of study issued by the Ministry of Education following Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. stipulates, in which fields and under what conditions study programmes are eligible. The following fields of study concerning teachers are recognised on the Bachelor's (three/four years) and Master's (two/three years) levels:

- 1.1.1 Training of teachers with academic subjects specialisation;
- 1.1.2 Training of teachers of vocational/practical subjects;
- 1.1.3 Training of teachers of arts.

The term “academic” replaced the commonly used term “general” in the list of study fields. This list reflects a legislative tradition of treating teachers of arts separately as a specific case of vocational teachers.

Bachelors from the first field (1.1.1) can only serve as auxiliary teachers for classroom or outdoor activities and also for administrative issues. Only masters are teachers of subjects (in practice they select one to three subjects) at the lower and upper secondary levels. They can also serve as methodologists and specialists in state/public administration.

Bachelors from the second field (1.1.2) can serve as teachers of vocational practical training and other practice oriented activities at VET schools. They can also serve as instructors for outdoor activities and administrators for the provision of practical training in VET. Only masters are teachers of respective vocational subjects at VET schools. They can also serve as methodologists and specialists in state/public administration.

With regard to bachelors from the third field (1.1.3), the same applies as in the first field of study. Only masters are teachers of respective art-related subjects at primary, lower and upper secondary levels and at basic schools of arts, as well as other facilities offering education in arts to students regardless of age. They can also serve as methodologists, specialists in state/public administration, and animators of free time activities.

It was envisaged by some experts that teachers of vocational subjects and teachers of practical training would graduate from training programmes for teachers of vocational/practical subjects, similarly as teachers of general subjects would graduate from training programmes for teachers with academic subjects specialisation. Nevertheless, there is a very tiny flow of students within programmes for teachers of vocational/practical subjects visible in statistics. In fact, it is corresponding to the tradition. A typical way preferred earlier and also now is to graduate from non-teaching programme and to decide for complementary pedagogical study, if relevant, later. Thus, the consecutive model of training proved to be demanded despite the aforementioned criticism, and rather the quality of complementary pedagogical study should be focused and stressed, and not the abolition of this model.

For a long period, reforms of teacher training were predominantly bottom-up driven and substantially influenced by the pressure of a demographic decline. As a consequence, institutions having originally been less interested in teacher/trainer training, started to develop new teacher and trainer training programmes to attract students and the aforementioned dominant model in preparation of VET teachers emerged as a subject of noisy disputes. It is worth mentioning that VET teacher training providers led by the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava responded to criticism appropriately by developing VET teacher standards with regard to pedagogical competences: Graduates from teacher training in pedagogy had to comply with 6 complex standards, represented by 40 indicators with explicitly set proofs.

According to the Concept for Professional Development of Teachers within the Career System, adopted by the government on 18th April 2007, teaching profession in Slovakia was characterised by the unclear professional status of teaching staff, ageing, feminisation of the profession, lack of qualified teachers and regional imbalances in teacher qualification, low attractiveness of the profession, insufficient attention paid to human resource development within the education sector as a whole, insufficient HRD practice of directors of schools and school establishments and inadequacies in both pre-service education and in-service training.

In fact, there are dangerous processes passing silently. Best student teachers do not enter teaching profession and a lot of others can see their position at schools as the third best option after a position in business and teaching/training activities within the business sector. As a consequence of the deteriorating status of teacher and trainers, a new act on pedagogical staff was envisaged to fight identified weaknesses. A competence based approach to professionalisation of pedagogical staff was adopted to improve both pre-service and in-service training.

A working group established by the Ministry of Education (consisting of representatives of the ministry and pre-service and in-service teacher training institutions) developed the Methodology Proposal for Developing Professional Standards for Individual Categories of Pedagogical Staff. This proposal reflected “Education and Training 2010” goals as well as the work of the European Commission Working Group B. Gradually, a new act resulted from reforming efforts aimed at a new concept of professionalisation of pedagogues (see the part below on continuing professional development).

Initial training of trainers

In the early 2000s, in order to be considered qualified, trainers at VET schools had to fulfil the minimum requirements of the Ministry of Education Decree No. 41/1996 Coll. on the Professional and Pedagogical Competence of the Pedagogical Staff. Professional (vocational) and pedagogical requirements were distinguished and precisely stipulated as follows:

- full secondary vocational education (graduation from ISCED 3A study programmes), a certificate of apprenticeship (ISCED 3C) and at least three years of practice;
- graduation from complementary pedagogical study (CPS) of 200 to 250 lessons of direct contact and as a rule, lasting two years, focusing on pedagogy and psychology; in case of VET schools for students with special educational needs, in addition, successful completion of training in special education qualifying for the work with special educational needs students.

A typical trainer’s background was as follows: graduation from ISCED 3C training in order to receive a certificate of apprenticeship, with subsequent ISCED 3A follow-up studies in order to receive a “maturita” school leaving certificate, and usually after some time in business and upon deciding to become a trainer at school, graduation from complementary pedagogical study (CPS) or a training programme in pedagogy completed at a methodological-pedagogical centre within in-service training, which was recognised as a temporary substitute for CPS. MPCs offered study within one of their in-service formats (the so-called specialised qualification study) with limited validity - till august 2010.

CPS programmes were offered by universities in four-semester full-time or three-semester part-time forms. Nevertheless, universities as the only qualification awarding bodies according to the law have gradually developed bachelor’s programmes to replace CPS and attract participants by awarding a degree. It is too soon to predict whether the traditional form of CPS will be replaced by bachelor studies. Statistics indicate that part-time form of such a bachelor study is becoming very attractive.

For the first time instructors responsible for vocational practical training of secondary VET students in enterprises were incorporated into educational legislation. These individuals are employed by employers who were contracted by VET school for provision of practical training. Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET also stipulates professional requirements to be met for this work position.

Strengths and weaknesses of initial training

Slovakia has a long tradition of a very detailed regulation of initial training of teachers. Since the end of 1940s teachers have been required to obtain tertiary education and since the 2000s,

strengthened by the Bologna reform, even kindergarten teachers and VET trainers massively graduate from bachelor studies. Teacher training is, however, traditionally strongly academically oriented; and practice focused on acquiring skills in pedagogy is traditionally a weak point of teacher training of all types. Student-teacher training includes a practical element; student teachers have to participate in classes of experienced teachers at schools, later teach regular classes under the supervision of a mentor, and consequently demonstrate their ability to work in a classroom independently. Nevertheless, experienced teachers are not interested in mentoring student teachers due to low remuneration. Similarly, the introduction of novice teachers into practice suffered from the weak status of mentors and lacking institutional support for a quality mentorship. Thus, the quality of pedagogy applied by the novice teacher in preparation for classroom or workshop activities, as well as the quality of activities that took place in education/learning process, were often insufficiently influenced by the best practice of leading experts/practitioners.

Continuing professional development

Till the reform starting in 2009, in-service training for IVET teachers was regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 42/1996 Coll. on the In-service Training of the Pedagogical Staff. The officially recognised forms of in-service training were as follows:

- introduction of new teachers to practice;
- refresher, short-term activities designed for deepening, broadening and updating knowledge and skills of teachers and trainers;
- specialised innovative study; long-term 2 years lasting training preparing for special activities (i.a. research) completed by defending thesis and leading to official recognition of higher level of “professional and pedagogical competence” and wage bonus;
- specialised qualification study; provided by in-service training institutions and designed for teachers and trainers in need to receive qualification (however with temporary validity only);
- training in leadership; obligatory for teachers in administrative positions;
- extending study; provided by higher education institutions and designed for teachers and trainers wishing to extend their qualification for teaching additional subjects, or on the other level of education, or in schools for students with special needs.

There were two levels of higher “professional and pedagogical competence” recognised, according to the Ministry of Education Decree No. 41/1996 Coll. on the Professional and Pedagogical Competence of the Pedagogical Staff. This decree stipulated details of 1st qualification exam and 2nd qualification exam. Both required a specific length of pedagogical practice, written paper submission and an exam taken in front of a committee. The aforementioned specialised innovative study represented a quite popular way to fulfilling the requirements of 1st qualification exam.

Respective forms of in-service training, apart from the introduction of novice teachers into practice, was carried out by independent legal bodies of the Ministry of Education – the State Institute of Vocational Education and 5 regional in-service training centres called methodological-pedagogical centres (MPC), and partly also by other sectoral training institutions entitled to provide in-service training accredited by the Ministry of Education. MPCs supplied a prominent part of education for teachers.

One of the advantages was that MPC was able to react flexibly to different educational requirements of teachers and schools. School needs were scanned once a year through questionnaires, which provided the information on the needs concerning the area of education,

form of education, its length and actual destination of training. This information from questionnaires was used to create educational projects, which were always offered to schools and teachers before the beginning of the school year.

Teachers were not required to attend formal education and applied for it according to their individual personal needs. A recommendation from the school headmaster was required to guarantee the connection to goals and needs of the school. The educational contribution was immediately verified in the teaching practice and this allowed to change the course design to accommodate the individual school needs. The financial value of such professional teacher development was based purely on the school decision and could be as high as 35 % of the basic salary.

An accredited certificate with state-wide validity was awarded after each educational programme was passed.

Individual MPCs had their own educational and training facilities located in respective regions, which provided training rooms and educational technology, as well as accommodation and food. Currently, these MPCs are components of the network with the headquarters in Bratislava and this legal subject is again called the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre.

The new Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff came in force since November 2009. This law is valid for all teachers in pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non tertiary education. The intention was to increase the social status and remuneration of pedagogical employees, to improve the quality of their training and address in a comprehensive way their continuing education, as well as to interlink it with further school development. This law also includes measures concerning the protection for the pedagogical employees from excessive psychological stress, protection of teachers from aggressive behaviour from students and/or their parents, differentiating of performances of pedagogical profession, and includes a proposal for fair evaluation and remuneration. This act creates a new legislative framework in three domains:

- rights, responsibilities, qualification prerequisites and professional development of a teacher;
- scope, aim, organisation and conclusion of individual categories of continuous education and accreditation of programmes of continuing education;
- teacher evaluation and care.

With regard to the first domain this act:

- guarantees the teacher a protection against unprofessional interference into his/her profession, however, this allows a degree of authority on the side of the founder of the school as well as the parent as the so-called “commissioners” of the education to actively co-create the school educational programmes;
- includes teachers into the category of public officers;
- requires from the VET teacher a Master’s degree in the required field as a qualification prerequisite; for graduates from non-teacher training programmes, it requires additional pedagogical training;
- requires from a VET trainer at least a Bachelor’s degree in the required field and additional pedagogical training as a qualification prerequisite;
- determines the professional standard as a starting point in the professional development;
- determines 4 career levels (as explained later);

- determines 2 career positions with the structure based on the decision of individual schools.

With regard to the second domain, this law understands continuing education of teachers and trainers as a basic step towards ensuring the quality of education. This law provides a framework for accreditation of continuing education, method of credit distribution, and defines the field of activity for providers of continuing education. Apart from the purpose of professional development, the continuing education is an integral part of the credit system. There are the following types of continuing education:

- adaptive education, which is obligatory for starting teachers. The teacher does not earn any credits for its completion;
- up-to-date education, which is designated for upholding the professional competence needed for standard performance or attestation;
- innovative education, which is meant to improve professional competence of a teacher;
- specialised education, which is aimed at acquiring professional competence for performance of specialised activities;
- function education, which is obligatory for teachers in administrative positions. The teacher does not earn any credits for its completion;
- qualification education, which provides the teacher with higher qualification.

There are two levels of attestation determined. Both require a specific length of pedagogical practice, a minimum amount of credits and an exam taken in front of a committee.

With regard to the third domain, each teacher has the right to claim five work days to complete continuing education. The completion of an accredited continuing education (by the Accreditation Commission for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff, established in November 2009 as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education) or other measurable results of creative work of teachers leads to the gain of credits. Five hours of continuing education are worth one credit. After gaining 30 credits, the teacher is authorized to receive a credit bonus of 6 % of the basic salary. It is expected that by 2010 8 % of teachers will be authorized to receive this bonus, and the number of teachers will rise to 28 % and 40 % in 2011 and 2012, respectively. After gaining additional 30 credits, the teacher is authorized to receive an additional credit bonus of 6 % of the basic salary. The measure calculated with 7 % of teachers awarded the bonus in the first year and 15 % in the second year after implementation. Apart from credit bonuses, there are other bonuses for specialized activities in education, e.g. for mentoring novice teachers, class teacher activities, a head of the subject department work, IT coordination at school, etc. This act also includes specific stipulations, such as a system of vaccination refunds for teachers and a legal right for paid 10-day wellness stay after 15 years of service and 5-day stay after every 5 years.

In contrast to the earlier legislation recognizing only two levels of increased qualification within the professional career, Act No. 317/2009 Coll. fully rebuild the earlier scheme offering a new model of career paths (see the example of initiative below). According to the law, pedagogical staff in every career position should possess prescribed competences and comply with a set of standards. Although focusing on continuing professional development, adopted competence based approach will indirectly influence also initial training, currently autonomously developed and offered by universities.

The following is to indicate the difference introduced by law on the example of mentoring novice teachers. Earlier, it was as a rule provided by an older colleague in the school where

the novice teacher started to work and it lasted for 1 year. A mentor assigned by a school director received a small financial bonus that was, however, not motivating for a quality assistance. Completion of introduction was supervised by the director. Thus, the quality of mentorship was depending on the moral integrity of the mentor and his/her professionalism and it was substantially subordinated to the respective school culture and/or director's opinion.

Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on pedagogical staff introduced a more detailed regulation of mentorship. A mentor is not just an experienced teacher identified by the school director, as used to be earlier, but now he/she has to be awarded 1st or 2nd attest. A mentee has to meet prescribed competences corresponding to a higher career level, i.e. "independent pedagogue" working position standards, as stipulated by law. Thus, it is not a purely internal issue as earlier. This introduction into practice, now called adaptive education, is compulsory and has to be completed within 2 years after hiring. A failure results in the termination of the contract of the novice teacher (beginning pedagogue according to the wording of this law). This comparison indicates stressing of external over internal instruments in assessment, and in general in a professionalization process. It does not, however, mean that the reform will result in improvement. Standards are still under debate and assistance in professionalization by means of credit gathering will heavily depend on the quality of offered activities (in particular accredited in-service courses).

Strengths and weaknesses of earlier and new continuing professional development models

The following are strengths of the earlier model:

- a close tie between school needs and professional teacher development;
- education provided according to actual teacher's needs;
- the possibility to flexibly react to immediate school's and teacher's needs;
- preparation and performance of only those educational projects, for which the actual interest was shown.

The following are weaknesses of the earlier model:

- lifelong education was not financed adequately;
- a weak state-wide information system on proposed and completed education.

The new continuing professional model is just in the process of introduction, and therefore, it is too early to assess it. Nevertheless, the following are strengths introduced by the new act:

- higher protection of teachers as public officers;
- school duty to develop the plan for professional development of teachers;
- allocate a work time of teachers for continuing education;
- determination of rules for accreditation of continuing education for teachers;
- the duty to evaluate the performance of a teacher at least once a year.

Here are weaknesses that seem to occur from the adopted legislation:

- credit allotment for the length of education and not for the quality of the education output;
- non-existence of agreed and officially set professional standards;
- insensitivity of the system towards the quality evaluation in the particular practice;

- low correlation of the credit system and the quality of education provided by the school;
- low capacity of providers of continuing education.

The career system reform outlined in the 2007 policy paper Concept for Professional Development of Teachers within the Career System, reflecting the needs to improve continuing professional development of teachers and trainers, was welcomed by pedagogical staff, and a new act on pedagogical staff was expected with positive feelings also due to the intention to increase the remuneration of pedagogical staff up to 1.4 of the average wage in the national economy (see Improving the Status of Teachers is Proving Costly. In: Cedefop Info 2/2007). Nevertheless, the Act itself, and in particular the forced institutional in-service education and the comparably low increase in wages resulting from it, is currently seen controversially and some signs of frustration are visible from teachers reactions (e.g. double article of an experienced teacher and responsible expert from the Ministry of Education, both reflecting the impact of the law in the Teachers' Newspaper dated 22nd February 2010).

Although the reform of continuing professional development of teachers and trainers was widely discussed, and it reflected a European discourse and documents, one important recommendation was not met: Recommendation to national policy makers from the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications reads "the contribution of research and evidence based practice to the development of new knowledge about education and training should be promoted". Improvement can hardly be expected due to the insufficient level of funding educational research. Slovakia is for a long time among poorly performing EU countries in funding research and development (0.49 % GDP compared to 1.84 % in EU27 in 2006, according to CERD indicator, Eurostat). Introduction of intended competence based and standard driven reform into full practice is however not possible without the strengthened cooperation of authorities with researchers and experienced practitioners. Otherwise, the identified competences and standards will only remain declarations of good intentions without a real impact on the improvement of the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Example of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>Professional development of teachers in a career system</p> <p>The 2007 Concept Paper for the Professional Development of Teachers in a Career System created a basis for preparation and adoption of Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff.</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>The current status and quality of teachers do not meet the requirements of knowledge society. Within the concept a crisis of the profession is characterised by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unclear professional status and identity of pedagogues; - ageing; - feminisation of the profession; - insufficient and unbalanced qualification of pedagogues across regions; - low attractiveness of the profession;

- insufficient quality of human resource strategy in the sector;
- low quality of human resource management at schools and school establishments;
- insufficient quality of pre-service and in-service training.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The main objective of the policy was to increase professional competences and quality of pedagogues and to increase their remuneration selectively based on attestation of activities.

The following specific targets were defined in the concept paper:

- defining requirements for pedagogues' professional competences through professional standards;
- developing a career system including career paths and levels enabling pedagogues to choose their own ways of professional development;
- developing a system of in-service training as part of lifelong learning;
- developing a credit system, which will include training of pedagogues in accredited programmes or other creative activities presenting outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- developing a new system of differentiated remuneration linked to professional standards, a career system and a credit system.

(c) Target groups

The policy is targeted at pedagogues in regional schooling.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The concept paper was approved by the government on 18th April 2007. Subsequently, the legislative intentions of the new law were submitted to public discussion in summer 2007 and approved by the government on 17th October 2007. Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff was finally adopted on 24th June 2009.

The concept paper proposed five categories of pedagogues and four career paths within each category. The act finally set the following categories of pedagogical staff: teacher, trainer, tutor, pedagogical assistant, foreign lector, trainer of sport school or sport class, and répétiteur. Additionally, it set five categories of other professional staff dealing with psychological, social and health aspects of education. The act specifies personal and qualification prerequisites concerning all categories of pedagogical and professional staff and it aims to improve teacher qualifications by using a model of continuing professional development with four career levels in all categories representing a career path marked by sets of respective standards for

- beginning pedagogue or professional worker;
 - independent pedagogue or professional worker;
 - pedagogue with the first attestation or professional worker with the first attestation;
 - pedagogue with the second attestation or professional with the second attestation;
- and two specific career positions:
- pedagogue specialist or professional worker specialist;
 - leading pedagogue/manager or leading professional worker.

The Accreditation Commission for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff has been set and 96 programmes were accredited by the end of March 2010.

A credit based bonus is set on 6 % of the wage tariff monthly for 30 credits achieved, with

the ceiling of 60 credits. Credits are valid for a maximum 7 years and therefore must be renewed. 30 credits correspond to about 180 hours of training.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The policy is being implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of a broader education policy.

The concept paper reflected European documents, such as Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and recommendations of the Commission's Working Group B. It is in concord with priorities of the National Reform Programme. The concept paper was reflected within the ESF Operational Programme Education covering the 2007-2013 programming period. The policy is included among strengths within the SWOT analysis, and the development of professional standards is considered inevitable for improving pre-service and in-service training of pedagogues and future teachers. Within the new 2007-2013 programming period, the following national projects (directly assigned) and projects responding to calls relevant to VET have been already launched:

- National Project (No. OPV/K/RKZ/NP/2008-2) within Priority Axes 2 and 4, Measures 2.1 and 4.2, aimed at further training of teachers of primary and secondary education in the subject Informatics;
- call within Priority Axis 1, Measure 1.1, aimed at designing and implementing projects to support development of students' key competences and usage of new learning materials (e.g. development of school educational programmes, innovation of methods and forms of instruction) at secondary schools;
- call within Priority Axis 4, Measure 4.1 "Transformation of the Traditional School into a Modern One for the Bratislava Region", aimed at designing and implementing projects to support development of students' key competences and usage of new learning materials (e.g. the development of school educational programmes, innovation of methods and forms of instruction) at secondary schools in the Bratislava Region.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education;
- Methodological-Pedagogical Centre;
- Accreditation Commission for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff;
- Educational institutions (higher education institutions, in-service training institutions directly managed by the Ministry of Education and other ministries);
- School establishers;
- Schools and school establishments.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

No evaluation studies have been elaborated so far. The Act is in force since November

2009.

(b) Indicators of success

- Professional standards of pedagogues developed;
- System of continuing training of pedagogues developed;
- Credit system developed;
- New system of differentiated remuneration of pedagogues developed;

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

This policy is already interlinked with reforms introduced by fully new educational legislation: Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.; Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET; Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning; Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll., lastly amended by Act No. 496/2009 Coll.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

A special working group developed a Methodology Proposal for Developing Professional Standards for Individual Categories of Pedagogical Staffs. Subsequently draft standards were developed and published in a pedagogical journal, however, finally not accepted by the Ministry of Education. The crucial decision concerning the professional standards of pedagogical staff is still pending. Currently, there are only “analytical descriptions” elaborated concerning working activities inevitable for initial categorisation of pedagogues according to categories stipulated by the new legislation.

Progress in career path seems to heavily depend on collecting credits from participation at “accredited continuing education” courses. There is a criticism warning against the underestimation of importance of individual learning. Furthermore, there were concerns expressed amid accreditation procedures and practice of the new Accreditation Commission for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

- It is important to find an agreement on final wording of respective sets of standards.
- It is important to decide on sources of promised higher remuneration - a serious problem in the current crisis causing a slowdown in economy. It was originally promised that the new system of remuneration would be accompanied with the increase of the average wage of pedagogues up to 140 % of the average wage in the national economy. However, the currently envisaged increase in wages is low not only for pedagogues receiving the tariff wage only, but also for those progressing in their career path (entitled for the bonus of 6 % of tariff wage). The following are basic tariff wages of pedagogues valid since 1st January 2010.

Wage tariffs corresponding to respective wage and working category in 2010

Wage and working category		Wage tariff (EUR)
6	1	363.00
	2	388.00
7	1	402.00
	2	430.50

8	1	446.00
	2	476.00
9	1	499.00
	2	532.50
10	1	544.50
	2	581.00
11	1	581.00
	2	622.00
12	1	639.00
	2	683.50

Source: Government resolution of 9th December 2009

Furthermore, it must be clarified to what extent attesting of pedagogical staff within continuing professional development should be based on meeting respective professional standards, i.e. achieving performance standards regardless of forms and extension of prior in-service training. In case credits of in-service training will become obligatory in a large extent and not replaceable by proves of professionalism, VET schools will suffer seriously, as an inflow of experienced professionals into VET schools could be hampered.

5. Source, legend

Concept Paper for the Professional Development of Teachers in a Career System,
<http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=790>
 Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff,
www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/317_2009.pdf

7. Enhancing creativity and innovation

7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

Transversal knowledge, skills and competences in VET qualifications

In contrast to the 1990s, the theory and practice in the curriculum development became more influenced by focusing on competence based programming in the 2000s. Key competences became a crucial term in curricula documents. In 2002, the State Institute of Vocational Education prepared a manual to support curriculum development reflecting key competences, and since 2008 state educational programmes, offering an obligatory framework for the development of autonomous school educational programmes, are competence based, explicitly requiring addressing respective key competences.

Entrepreneurship is among key competences that must be explicitly addressed within school educational programmes at ISCED 2C, 3C, 3A, 4A and 5B levels. Respective state educational programmes specify competences related to entrepreneurship to be achieved by graduates. Respective state educational programmes offer the framework for the autonomous development of school educational programmes with regard to this.

The ESF project "Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes" has been designed to improve skills of curricula designers at schools to reflect the new competence based approach within their own school educational programmes. Nevertheless, the translation into practice has been hampered by a lack of experience, in particular with regard to those competences with a strong transversal effect. Although recognised as worth of improvement, learning to learn skills or information processing skills were promoted by theorists and administrators rather than efficiently supported nation-wide in education and training. As a rule, development of transversal competences was insufficiently seen as a cross-curricular issue and was better mastered by educators within specific subjects. Social and civic competences became pronounced within the subjects Civic Education, Ethics, Religion, and the special subject was also created for supporting the development of entrepreneurial skills. This is an example of the newly introduced subject aimed at the development of intra/entrepreneurship skills: training of 60 hours has been offered for students in the 4th grade of 4-year study programme. Many transversal skills were declared here, as addressed by training: problem solving, decision making, communicating, planning, accepting alternative points of view, initiative taking, coping with failures and malpractice.

Another example is the subject Economic Practice in Training Firm introduced into curricula based on the successful experience of the network of training firms at secondary commercial schools originally developing entrepreneurial skills outside of official curricula. Currently, the training firm activities are backed by the initiative to embed them into formal curricula. Schools running training firms also developed into a strong international network, within which the Slovak experience proved to be worth of further study. The State Institute of Vocational Education as an official Slovak representative in the EUROPEN - PEN INTERNATIONAL (the world-wide practice firms network), carrying out international projects, and some schools, e.g. Commercial School, Watsonova str., Košice, or Commercial School Levice, offer a good practice example in innovative networking (see the example of networking in promotion of entrepreneurship and a successful intrapreneurship initiative in 7.4).

One of the oldest and successful initiatives to support entrepreneurship is the Bata Junior Achievement. In contrast to training firms simulating all administrative activities and also making trainees familiar with administration of businesses, this initiative focuses dominantly on developing a spirit of entrepreneurship.

Interesting results in the development of entrepreneurial skills were also achieved due to the support from the ESF, e.g. within the national project “First-Rate Schooling – Successful Living” carried out by the consortium of institutions headed by the Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia during January 2007 to October 2008 (see the example below).

A recent intrapreneurial project starting in 2009 is a project disseminating a board game aimed at the development of entrepreneurial skills and acquiring the fundamental economic knowledge by means of informal learning. Schoolgames Slovakia, s.r.o., adjusted the already internationally used business game project to Slovak conditions. A pilot competition, held in Bratislava in December 2009 with 5 school teams from Slovakia and Austria, proved that the game is worth of implementation. About 500 secondary schools were already engaged in early 2010 receiving game sets for free sponsored by a network of important companies (www.schoolgames.sk).

The development of transversal skills is often targeted by competitions organised in cooperation between schools and professional associations or companies (see the example in chapter 7.3).

Furthermore, in fact surprisingly, two ministries without the responsibility towards education took the initiative to improve transversal skills of their particular interest. The Ministry of Finance decided to contribute to improvement of literacy in financial issues and the Ministry of Culture to improvement of media literacy (see the examples of initiatives of Ministry of Finance below and of Ministry of Culture in chapter 7.4).

Main innovations in the pedagogical content/curricula generally

The need for innovations of curricula resulted from the brutal changes in the labour market during the period of restructuring the economy as a whole. Some curricula became obsolete also due to technological development. Till 2008 any innovative interventions were finally discussed by the expert commissions affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education. Being responsible for professional quality of curricula respective expert commissions submitted the so-called basic pedagogical documents (BPD) for final approval to the Ministry of Education. BPDs represented a very detailed description with over sixty pages in case of the shortest ones and over 400 pages in case of the largest ones.

Table 7.1: Innovated BPDs in study/training branches of secondary VET schools* in 2003-2008

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of innovated curricula	36	57	34	85	32	23

Source: State Institute of Vocational Education

Note: * schools under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education only

These BPDs innovated according to the innovation demand were obligatory for all respective schools, however, the 1990 Ministry of Education internal regulation allowed for the adjustment of these curricula to schools’ and regional specific needs and to apply changes up to 10 % of the weekly instruction hours and 30 % of the content in individual grades. In the 2000s a tendency to a shift from content based to competence based curriculum design is

visible. All curricula were designed based on the Standard of Secondary VET, which was developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education and approved by the Ministry of Education on 10th July 2002, followed by the manual in 2003 to assist schools in better understanding of forthcoming changes in curricula development; with a focus on key competences and decentralisation by the so-called two-level approach to curricula development. In 2008, a decentralisation reform was introduced making obligatory only state educational programmes and leaving elaboration of details on the autonomously developed school educational programmes. The right of schools to reshape weekly calendars with the provision of subjects and hours was confirmed by law and the former universal 10 %/30 % formula was replaced by eligible adjustment limits stipulated by respective state educational programmes.

A curricular reform, opening the door for initiatives of schools due to the decentralisation of curriculum development, should be substantially supported by the ESF project "Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes", aimed at training in curriculum development. Schools with active managers have also opportunities to respond to the calls within Priority Axis 1 "Reform of the Education and Vocational Training System", Measure 1.1 "Transformation of Traditional School into a Modern One" and a similar measure within Priority Axis 4 "Modern Education for a Knowledge-Based Society for the Bratislava Region".

Strengths and weaknesses

The importance of creativity and innovativeness in schools has been pronounced with the high voice for long years. A focus on creativity was even stressed back in the 1970s within the global reform of the Czechoslovak education system. Nevertheless, the weak point of policy making was the creation of working interface, translating ideas into practice. There were no efficient instruments to attract creative/innovative practitioners to additional work beyond their regular duties, offering them professional assistance and funding. The Innovation Fund established for a short period in the early 1990s within the PHARE programme indicated the interest of practitioners and a potential for stimulation of practitioners' activities, however, without continuation with national funding after closing the programme. In the 2000s, many private bodies offered support to schools and practitioners to refresh curricula and/or learning environment, at least partly due to the tax incentive introduced in support of non-profit organisations. 2 % tax credit (the right to directly allocate the corresponding amount of tax money to non-profit organisations) allowed for collecting funds used for diverse third sector initiatives (towards education and also other fields, environmental, health, etc.). Unfortunately, this important instrument is going to be gradually weakened (see chapter 8 on financing), very likely reducing the inflow of means to NGOs since 2011. Even in case of stronger financial supporting, the improvement in pedagogy might continue to suffer from the insufficient understanding by authorities of the importance of permanent daily hard working. The creation of pro-innovative and pro-creative environment in everyday relations between learners and teachers and other learning facilitators needs to be supported by concerted and widely set policies, including targeted medial policies, and by the involvement of society opinion makers. It is necessary to increase the awareness of the society as a whole on the importance of the change in this field for the future of this country, and in particular the economy currently too much focusing on the assembly industry.

The ESF programme is expected to support top-down initiatives via national projects under the surveillance of the Ministry of Education as well as bottom up activities. The administrative load as well as the required availability of means for co-financing and pre-

financing, however, create opportunities for financially strong institutions rather than for those with the expertise in the field. A recent practice in the ESF administration has even discouraged individual practitioners with the best relevant experience in the field, due to a bureaucratic approach and a slow progress in reimbursement of costs. This could lead to weakening of the final impact on everyday practice, provided the administratively simple and on small players targeted financing schemes are not offered. With abandoning of 2 % tax credit scheme, activities similar to the Orange Foundation grant scheme might be endangered in their extent (see www.nadaciaorange.sk/index.php?id_cat=23&rs=150)

The following are examples representing two types of initiatives. The first project is based on the activity financed by the ESF inviting an entrepreneurial sphere to initiate changes in education/learning process.

Examples of initiative

<p>1. Title of policy measure</p> <p>The ESF project “First-Rate Schooling – Successful Living” (5th January 2007 to 31st October 2008)</p>
<p>Outline of the policy/measure</p> <p>(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).</p> <p>The project resulted from the need to enhance the cooperation of secondary schools with the business to promote entrepreneurial education enabling students to acquire skills required in practice.</p> <p>(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).</p> <p>The project was aimed at improving the quality of secondary education through developing of graduates’ skills, including entrepreneurial ones, meeting labour market needs. The targets included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating a sustainable system interlinking entrepreneurs needs and secondary school curricula in individual regions; - developing the content of entrepreneurial education. <p>(c) Target groups</p> <p>Students and teachers of secondary schools in IVET.</p> <p>(d) Status of implementation</p> <p>The main project product is a set of 6 guides for teachers corresponding to 6 modules structured into courses with in total 150 lessons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basis of economics 2. Business start up 3. Financing and planning of business 4. Management and marketing 5. Business communication 6. Business ethics <p>The modules consist of courses that can be independently used by teachers to meet</p>

individual needs of their schools and students.

The teaching/learning materials include textbooks, case studies, economic and entrepreneurial games.

The results are available from the dedicated website www.svetvzdelavania.sk. The website consists of three main sections providing services for three core target groups – students, teachers and firms.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The project was implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The national project was launched within the ESF Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority 3 “Increasing the Qualification and Adaptability of Employees and Persons Entering the Labour Market”, Measure 3.1 “Adaptation of Vocational Training and Education to the Needs of the Knowledge-Based Society”, and the corresponding priority within the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia;
- Slovak University of Technology;
- F. A. Hayek Foundation;
- University of Economics experts.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Project results have been incorporated into curricula. The project was awarded a prize within the national round of the European Enterprise Awards in 2008.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

- 6 study programmes were innovated;
- 40 630 students were affected by innovated curriculum as a consequence of implementation of this project;
- 1 407 educators were involved or retrained.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

Project has been mainstreamed as mentioned above and results are available for further adjustment by interested bodies.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

A project team had difficulties to attract employers to participate on workshops, despite declared interest in the project. Therefore, workshops were gradually replaced by individual meetings of entrepreneurs and experts. In this way valuable inputs were gained.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

While the project successfully contributed to the improvement of teaching/learning resources, it is still insufficiently examined what are the barriers of cooperation of schools and businesses, and what forms of cooperation proved to be successful and are therefore suitable for dissemination. There were success stories from Slovakia and other countries identified and placed on the dedicated website for further inspiration, however, without a deeper analysis clarifying what worked, and identifying the dissemination potential and preconditions to be met.

5. Source, legend

Závěrečná správa o implementácii Sektorového operačného programu Ľudské zdroje za programové obdobie 2004-2006 [Final Report on Implementation of Sectoral Operational Programme for 2004-2006 Programming Period]. Bratislava, MPSVR SR, 2010
Project website www.svetvzdelavania.sk

The second project is a typical top down activity of governmental bodies reflecting the international stimuli.

Examples of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

The Strategy for Financial Education and Personal Finance Management, including financial education standard setting

The Strategy was approved by the government on 2nd July 2008.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

The development of the Strategy for Financial Education and Personal Finance Management resulted from the increasing need to improve the individual's level of understanding financial matters and basic economics due to the increasing complexity of financial services offered to them, and from the need to balance the individual and family responsibility and the responsibility of public institutions and their policies in creating opportunities for assertion of individuals in life. Financial education should be provided through targeted educational programmes developed based on the National Standard of Financial Literacy. The principles for provision of financial education suggested by the European Commission have been reflected in strategy implementation.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

Main tasks are as follows:

- development of the standard of financial literacy for individual levels of education;
- incorporation of the standard of financial literacy into all state educational programmes;
- development of the model of continuing education of pedagogical staff in financial literacy;
- implementation of the Strategy into educational activities within continuing education.

(c) Target groups

- Teachers;
- Pupils of basic schools;
- Students of secondary schools including VET schools;
- Trainees within lifelong learning.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The Strategy was approved by the government on 2nd July 2008. Subsequently, the Trans-sectoral expert group was established as an advisory body. Its tasks included the development and further maintaining of the National Standard of Financial Literacy.

The Standard (1.0 version) was developed by the end of October 2008. It identified seven main topics related to the financial literacy: Man and money, Financial responsibility and decisions taking, Provision of money to meet one's needs – income and job, Planning and management of money, Loan and debt, Saving and investing, Risk management and insurance. Within each topic overall competencies and corresponding partial competences to be acquired by students were set, the latter identified for three levels of education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3). The Standard was approved and issued by the Ministry of Education in March 2009. Since the 2009/2010 school year it has been incorporated into state educational programmes (in case of VET schools as their annex) and into school educational programmes. Financial education at schools has been supported by the textbook School Family Calendar of Financial Literacy developed by Junior Achievement Slovakia and published at the end of 2009. Currently, the electronic learning aid "Open Book of Financial Literacy" is under preparation.

On 14th May 2009, the Ministry of Education approved the Model of Continuing Education of Pedagogical Staff in Financial Literacy. The Model was developed in compliance with the Standard and it includes tasks to be carried out by institutions responsible for in-service teacher training and by education and finance ministries since July 2009 till June 2010. The tasks comprise the provision of in-service training, provision of methodological guidance, development of online portal to support public discussion, guidance, monitoring and innovative proposals, development of methodology for schools, calls for the development of learning materials, provision of on-line training – establishment of the so-called bank of financial literacy (the list of educational sources).

Following the Model, the in-service teacher training programme aimed at the financial literacy has been developed within the ESF national project on "Professional and Carrier Development of Pedagogical Staff", Activity 2.2 "Development and Accreditation of Continuing Education Programmes for Pedagogical and Professional Staff", carried out by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre. The programme consists of 60 hours (40 face-to-face, 20 distance learning) and teachers will receive 14 credits upon its successful completion. The first courses will start in 2010.

On 18th August 2009, the Ministry of Education approved the document on the

implementation of the Strategy into the educational activities related to continuing education and information system for lifelong guidance, and on the incorporation of the Standard into the National System of Qualifications, which should be developed following the Act on Lifelong Learning. Based on the Standard of financial literacy applicable to continuing education has been developed and its reflection by educational programmes is assessed within the accreditation process.

Many activities focused on financial literacy were carried out before the adoption of the Strategy. E.g. the optional subject Personal Finance Management (developed based on the initiative of the Children of Slovakia Foundation) was included by the Ministry of Education into the curricula of grammar schools and secondary VET schools in 2007. Currently, the pedagogy of this subject should be updated to comply with the Standard.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The policy is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of educational policies covering formal education with the aim to influence non-formal and informal learning.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Finance;
- State Institute of Vocational Education;
- National Institute for Education;
- University of Economics;
- In-service teacher training institutions;
- Schools;
- Academia Istropolitana;
- National Academy of Financial Education (to be established by the Ministry of Finance);
- Junior Achievement Slovakia;
- Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia;
- Children of Slovakia Foundation.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Financing education standards were set and are in process of implementation into education/learning.

It is too soon to evaluate the impact of policy. There were no evaluation studies completed so far.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

No specific indicators of success have been set. Nevertheless, some results were already mainstreamed by inclusion into curricula

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

A national project campaign targeting financial education of all citizens and aimed at increasing their financial literacy was envisaged.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

The strategy is quite ambitious, however, translation into practice might be hampered by a lack of means. The main source of funding is the ESF and therefore its implementation might be hampered by a lack of means from regular budgets of involved institutions to secure the sustainability of new activities.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The following activities are expected to be carried out in the near future:

- Integration of the Standard into qualification standards within educational programmes developed based on the National System of Qualifications (currently under preparation);
- Development of the project focused on nation-wide education (national project campaign targeting financial education of all citizens and aimed at increasing the financial literacy);
- Support of financial education in higher education;
- Support for the research in financial education and financial literacy;
- Statistical survey carried out among individuals and families on their performance in financial matters.

5. Source, legend

The Strategy for Financial Education and Personal Finance Management,

<http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=5574>

The policy paper on situation in implementation of financial education:

<http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=2606>

The Standard: www.siov.sk/index/open_file.php?ext_dok=11294

7.2 Improving quality of teaching

Innovative pedagogies and learning strategies

There were four traditional institutions responsible for in-service training in the capital city and three administrative regions. They were transformed in 2008 into one institution - the

Methodological-Pedagogical Centre (MPC), with the head office in Bratislava and currently 8 regional dependences spread over the country. MPC (and before 2008 regional MPCs as independent legal bodies) offered diverse initiatives in support of innovativeness within in-service training regulated by the respective decree of the Ministry of Education allowing for promotion of teachers and trainers. In addition, there were many, usually non-profit organisations, offering initiatives often based on international experience, however, without cofinancing from the state budget. Thus, these kinds of activities were sensitive to sponsors and/or fees and other contributions to cover costs (e.g. travel cost, accommodation) from trainees.

Since November 2009, with coming in force of Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff, traditional, more or less supply driven in-service training has been confirmed, despite important changes (see chapter 6.5). Setting of specific standard based career paths and linking credit based continuing education and training with better remuneration create a huge demand for participation in in-service training, and for collecting credits. It is intended that innovative pedagogies must be stimulated by continuing education and training, but it is not possible to assess results yet, as the accreditation of larger amounts of programmes is not expected before 2nd quarter of 2010. In the early 2010s the ESF based programmes are dominant.

The national project “Professional and Career Development of Pedagogical Staff”, coordinated by the MPC on the request of Ministry of Education, is aimed at creating an effective system of in-service training with a special focus on the development of key competences of educators. The project has been launched since 15th October 2009 and expects a minimum of 20 000 people to be trained within 48 months of its duration. Within its Activity 4.1 “Development of the Interactive Educational Portal” an interactive portal using a video conferencing system should be developed, providing an effective and quick access to teaching/learning materials. This portal will be compatible with the Data Centre of the Ministry of Education (repository of data serving for administrative and educational needs), which is under development. Within Activity 4.2 classrooms for continuing education will be further developed, equipped with modern technology. It is too soon to predict an impact of the new format of in-service training on pedagogy in schools and workshops.

The main aim of the Data Centre pilot project is to test the possibilities for its use in the distribution of digital content and making it accessible for schools, as well as to test the implementation of the digital content in the educational process. The digital content for five subjects – Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Natural Science, has been made accessible for this purpose.

The State Institute of Vocational Education is running an important national ESF project “Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes” aimed at modernization of curriculum development and teaching methods, which refer to all VET fields. According to Strategic Goal No. 2, innovative pedagogies aimed at increasing motivation, critical thinking and creativity are envisaged. Nevertheless, the translation of ideas from new educational programmes into practice might be hampered by a severe diversity in the quality of learning environments in respective schools.

For motivating young people to become craftsmen and for the development of professional pride, competitions of craftsmen are an inevitable supplement of formal school based training. There are plenty of competitions for almost all crafts organised in the country, some with competitions at the national level, some with local and regional focus. A new regulation

No. 13/2009-R on organisation, managing and funding competitions of students and pupils was issued by the Ministry of Education on 25th August 2009 to recognise the contribution of competitions to the development of specific competences, i.a. due to the exposition to the competitive environment and comparison with the level of professionalism of peers, and also to prepare candidates for international competitions.

There is a specific department at the State Institute of Vocational Education dealing with competitions and the annual exhibition JUVYR within which representatives of VET schools demonstrate their skills. Of course, competitions are organised within other platforms, e.g. regionally and by diverse guilds and other professional organisations. Nevertheless, as a result of the European initiative Euroskills a restructuring process started to subsume respective competitions to Euroskills. In contrast to the earlier practice, winners of national competitions will be offered the opportunity to apply for participation and nomination to Euroskills competitions (see the example on competitions in chapter 7.3).

New technologies and networking

There is a boom of initiatives making use of new technologies and training to attract practitioners to contribute to the development of digital learning materials as well as to share experience between peers. The first portal offering a resource centre structured according to respective subject matters emerged within the Infovek (Infoage) project, a first comprehensive programme aimed at implementation of ICT into education. Due to the insufficient funding from public sources cooperation with the private sector became inevitable, resulting in the enrichment of activities. Currently, a portal Modern Teacher (www.modernyucitel.net) sponsored by Microsoft offers an attractive platform for experience sharing. Following the activities of Infovek it offers hundreds of class ready learning materials, short prefabs appropriate for inclusion into respective lessons as well as full lessons. It also offers a space for blogs for Clubs of Modern Teachers. The first club was established on 4th October 2007 by the Commercial School in Levice and there were already 28 clubs (including 7 at VET schools) in February 2010. The portal also interlinks specialised initiatives of which “P-mat” focusing on Mathematics and Science has its roots in activities starting back in the 1970s.

Cofinanced by the ESF, the educational portal Škola Plus (School Plus), www.skolaplus.sk, was established and maintained by the MPC Prešov, with three modules named after its target groups – Youth, Teacher, Parent. With 864 756 hits and 3 264 registered users for deeper cooperation this portal proved a potential for experience exchange and intensive communication among all involved. Unfortunately, similarly to other promising initiatives, this portal is also endangered by project closing.

Also, two strongest telecommunication providers offer dedicated platforms to support education. For instance, the aforementioned Orange Foundation maintains portal offering digital learning materials for students, www.oskole.sk. Slovak Telekom has been organising a competition for teachers with ICT competences offering financial award for 3 best contributions in 4 categories (www.cenast.sk) since 2006 (see the example below). The Endowment Fund Slovak Telekom, in co-operation with the Intenda Foundation (active also in supporting active citizenship development as mentioned in chapter 5.3), support also other projects focused on innovation in education, in particular ICT based ones (www.fondst.sk/podpora-inovacii-vo-vzdelavani).

“E-Chamber of Teachers” (www.ekomorauचितelov.sk), the virtual professional community of teachers of all levels and specialisations, has also been established as one of the initiatives of people originally engaged in Infovek. Offering an alternative focus, creating a lobbyist – a professional association of educators in addition to common electronic activities, this initiative might complement the aforementioned portals. However, there is also a risk of slowdown due to the lack of funding after a promising start. A database of innovating teachers is maintained by E-Chamber and listed in the portal.

The improvement in using ICT in education and the dramatic change in information exchange with a vivid social networking also within the education sector is the most visible impact of new emerging technologies. Hidden behind the general technological progress, there are, however, less visible changes affecting learning environment. After a long period of deterioration the equipment of schools has been substantially improving in the second part of this decade. After the entry into EU the booming economy requiring a new staff and skills resulted in the interventions of employers into the improvement of VET school equipment. New strategic investors (the best known and quoted example refers to automotive sector investors) as a rule entered cooperation with schools in order to influence the supply of labour force (see the example in chapter 6.1). Nevertheless, the sectors in crises or vulnerable due to the competition with low cost countries (e.g. textile, shoe, glass industries) and regions not attractive for investors have remained disadvantaged and schools continue to suffer from inappropriate equipment. In contrast to general education where changes in pedagogy are often substantially stimulated by alternative views of social science experts, for VET schools the quality equipment or access to new technologies provided by businesses is an inevitable precondition of improvement. From that point of view the VET schools of booming industries are in advantage.

The Young Digital Planet (www.ydp.eu) resources were adapted for the Slovak portal Planet of Knowledge www.planetavedomosti.sk to pilot at 19 primary and secondary schools the applicability of the electronic education system based on this international experience. In the 2009/2010 school year a number of participating schools will gradually increase up to 120. Currently, services are only accessible for teachers, in contrast to the original portal offering services also for individual learners. The Planet of Knowledge is envisaged to be a content related component of the Data Centre of the Ministry of Education operated by the Institute of Information and Prognoses. The Data Centre information portal is expected to cover all services including the digital learning environment for respective target groups (educators, learners, stakeholders), performance assessment tools (including online “maturita” school leaving exams) and administrative data. It should also offer a central platform for networking and information. The full functionality of the Data Centre is expected to be achieved in 2012.

A huge modernisation debt caused by a long period of underfinancing VET schools translated into lagging behind the technological progress in equipment (and causing deterioration of the quality of practice) is very hard to overcome. Due to the limited financial sources available in domestic companies (dominantly small and medium-sized), the crucial impulse for technological renewal is coming from international investors. As the Slovak economy is dominated by the automotive industry first large impulses came from this sector of economy. Furthermore, due to both the importance of the automotive industry and a strong lobby, the reform of automotive industry affiliated VET is also supported from the ESF.

The national project “Developing New Education Programmes in Vocational Training for the Needs of Automobile Industry II”, coordinated by the State Institute of Vocational Education, is aimed at designing new programmes in machinery and electrical engineering on request of the automotive industry. New graduates’ profiles have been created corresponding to

employers' needs and reflecting technological change in the industry. Teachers and trainers are to be offered e-learning based training in order to have an unlimited opportunity in acquiring skills inevitable for new pedagogy. A "digital factory" is at the core of the modernisation of learning process offering options for learning by doing with visualisation of close-to-real processes in a plant. Innovativeness of this approach is expected to lead to a change in the paradigm of pedagogy, if thoroughly prepared and introduced. A success in this cooperation can also pave the way for cooperation of VET schools and other restructured industries.

Strengths and weaknesses

Although a huge demand for in-service training has been created by the new Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff, and private bodies are also eligible for submission of programmes for accreditation, there is a risk that hunting for credits and subsequent awards will dominate over the intrinsic motivation to improve own professionalism by self-learning. Although the recognition of individually acquired competences is envisaged and credits can also be gained for other activities and not just for participation at training (development of textbooks, teaching aids, etc.), it is not clear to what extent the provision of credit bringing activities will correspond to individual teachers' and trainers' needs. Furthermore, funding of training is currently available predominantly from the ESF, as the contribution from the state budget for schools earmarked for teacher and trainer training is insufficient. There is a risk that teachers pushed to invest in in-service training from their own pockets will prefer effective allocation of means in terms of short return (and gaining desired credits) instead of acquiring urgently needed competences. Quality performance in a classroom might be considered less important in contrast to the proofs required by the continuing professional development scheme (CPDS) for higher remuneration. A crucial precondition of the success of the new CPDS is the permanent provision of a variety of credit bringing initiatives accessible without serious barriers. Furthermore, a relevant focus is inevitable aimed at addressing competences crucial for the quality performance of teachers and other pedagogues; and/or competences identified as needed of further improvement for respective individuals.

A huge improvement is visible in using ICT in education as well as in teacher communities. A dramatic lagging behind the developed countries, but also the new EU countries, visible in the early 2000s, seems to be over and the country seems to catch up. Besides educational authorities also NGOs and businesses perform activities in support of innovativeness including innovativeness in technology. Significantly, also here the crucial problem is the sustainability of initiatives after the initial sources of funding are drawn. Many promising ICT related projects supported by the ESF within the earlier programming period are permanently at risk of termination. Furthermore, interlinking ICT related activities of practitioners with the new CPDS, introduced by the Act No. 317/2009 Coll. and allowing the collection of credits also for these activities, will need some time and administration. Many of them, e.g. the Slovak Telecom competition, substantially contribute to the professional development of teachers, and it is therefore important to interlink this kind of activities and products resulting from them with the formalized CPDS.

A crucial weakness is the initial and in-service training institutions' lagging behind in new technology use. The digital competence of teachers has been improving as a consequence of activity of teachers and trainers exposed to new requirements in their professional lives rather than due to improved initial training at initial training institutions. An insufficient reflection of ICT potential and insufficient focus on the improvement of respective ICT competences of student teachers must be urgently addressed.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

The Slovak Telecom Award

A competition for teachers making use of ICT in teaching of non-ICT subjects.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

The Slovak Telecom (ST) has decided to support the exchange of teachers' experience in making use of ICT in non-ICT subjects. In 2006 it launched a competition to encourage teachers to share their own experience and to prize the best ones for their work.

The competition is aimed at

- sharing experience in pedagogy and methodological issues concerning the ICT utilisation in non-ICT subjects;
- facilitating teachers' understanding of ICT utilisation in instruction;
- encouraging teachers to make use of ICT in their subjects;
- support for modernisation of education and ICT utilisation in the educational process;
- support for curricular transformation in education;
- support for student-teacher cooperation;
- support for the development of school educational programmes;
- support for making use of Internet and other ST electronic services in schools.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

The competition includes submission of the project presenting teachers' own experience in making use of ICT in their own, however, non-ICT subjects. This experience should be open for further exploitation and utilisation by other teachers or schools. There are no restrictions concerning the project topic, except for the utilisation of ICT in non-ICT subjects. The competition has several categories. The evaluation committee (consisting of respectable experts from universities, the Ministry of Education, national educational institutions) considers the scope of ICT utilisation, originality of pedagogical techniques, attractiveness for students, methodological value, quality, usability of described methods, and reflection of ongoing changes in education and of curricular transformation. Participants ranked at first three places in each category are awarded a financial prize. Their projects are made available through the virtual library at the competition's dedicated website www.cenast.sk.

(c) Target groups

Teachers of all types of schools from kindergartens to secondary schools, except the ICT teachers. Participants eligible for the competition are

- individual teachers;
- groups of teachers;
- groups consisting of teacher and students.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The first call for a competition was made in 2006. In 2006-2008 the competition was divided into three categories (basic schools, secondary schools, special education). In 2008, participants could also submit projects presenting the school educational programmes for individual non-ICT subjects. In 2009, the number of competition categories has increased to four:

1. Kindergartens and the 1st stage of basic school (grades 1-4);
2. 2nd stage of basic school (grades 5-9);
3. Secondary schools;
4. Education of special educational needs students.

The winners of each category received the following financial prizes:

1st place – EUR 1 330

2nd place – EUR 830

3rd place – EUR 500

Moreover, the ST awarded the honorary certificates for additional three participants in each category, which also included a financial prize of EUR 150.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The initiative was implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The initiative is part of ST long-term policies in support of modernisation of the education system. In 2004 it launched the “PCs for Schools” project aimed at wiring all basic and secondary schools to Internet. In 2009, the initiative “Support for Innovation in Education” was launched (in this case via the Endowment Fund of Slovak Telecom) to award grants for educational projects focused on innovative pedagogy, in particular implementation and utilisation of new digital technology in the educational process. In its first year in 2009 this initiative was supported by EUR 50 000, with maximum of EUR 6 600 per one project. In 2010, EUR 40 000 was allocated with maximum of EUR 5 000 per one project.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Slovak Telecom;
- schools.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

There have been no evaluation studies conducted. Nevertheless, the impact is visible from statistical data about teachers involved and from respective products maintained at the dedicated website. The activity is positively perceived by the teaching and training community.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

693 participants entered the competition during 2006-2009. Projects are accessible for further exploitation through the virtual library at www.cenast.sk. Currently, the library contains over 680 projects. 250 address secondary education - most of them general and vocational subjects at VET schools.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

It is an initiative of a company proud of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies. There are also more CSR related activities of this company conducted by the Endowment Fund Slovak Telekom (www.fondst.sk).

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

No serious obstacles have been encountered. The competition was very well promoted. The information campaign included a road show through self-governing regions, the information distributed to schools by mail and electronic mail.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Due to the reorganisation of Slovak Telecom (merging with T-mobile) and due to a lower interest of teachers in last year the company considers the modification of the competition focus in 2010.

5. Source, legend

Competition website, www.cenast.sk

7.3 Innovation-friendly institutions

Traditional instruments in support of innovativeness are based on the focused activities within in-service training and continuing professional development. Developing specific teaching and learning methods, including the use of ICT tools has been also supported by many ESF related projects. The new 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education invites VET institutions to respond to calls within Priority Axis 1 “Reform of the Education and Vocational Training System”, Measure 1.1 “Transformation of Traditional School into a Modern One”, and the corresponding measure within Priority Axis 4 “Modern Education for a Knowledge-Based Society for the Bratislava Region”.

There is, however, no specific scheme already elaborated or policy implemented to make VET institutions more innovation-friendly. In fact, VET institutions for the long period fighting for survival focused dominantly on innovativeness aimed at attracting students (as each student brings additional funds according to the per capita financing scheme) and they were less interested in more demanding and sophisticated activities aimed at innovativeness

per se, provided there were not financially rewarded. Examples of good practice at least partially identifiable from past and future projects need to be studied in order to contribute to the pro-innovative environment. Currently, only some islands of dedicated individuals rather than a pro-innovative policy mechanism can be seen in the country. It is also too soon to assess the potential of the new continuing professional development model introduced by the new Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff.

A crucial role for implementation of ICT in education and learning was played by the Infovek project aimed at improving digital literacy and equipping schools with computers, and by the Slovak Telecom initiative allowing for wiring all schools to the Internet. Within the 2004-2006 ESF programming period many demand driven projects contributed to improvement by provision of financing, and gradually also businesses started to support schools in promoting new technologies. The aforementioned Data Centre of the Ministry of Education should encompass diverse ICT based activities offering one stop shop entry for any interested (see the part New technologies and networking in chapter 7.2).

Strengths and weaknesses

Innovativeness of schools has been for a long period hampered by the insufficient funding from the state budget and insufficient focus of VET schools on labour market needs caused by the practice in financing VET. Not stimulated by the financial scheme and not encouraged to innovations by employers schools concentrated on innovations important for attraction of students rather than on provision of quality qualifications or even on reflection of labour market needs.

It is positive that the new legislative environment offers a space for employers' involvement, however, the domination of utilitarian needs (this time those of employers in contrast to those of schools in earlier times) should be prevented. It is too soon to see the impact of the new legislation, but there is a risk of overestimation by lawmakers of the potential of employers in improving IVET, e.g. improving in pedagogy cannot be expected solely from employers. Making VET institutions more innovation-friendly, in particular by developing specific teaching and learning methods, requires the identification and special support to dedicated practitioners and creation of the innovation friendly environment at schools. A specialised research should be conducted to identify tools in support of this and to remove obstacles that might prove being much deeper anchored in the society as a whole than expected. Slovakia is one of the EU worst performing countries in innovativeness measured by the European Innovation Scoreboard with only the capital region rated as an average innovator (at the EU average) and other NUTS II regions rated as the lowest level innovators on the 5-point scale. With for long years one digit number of patent applications per million inhabitants to the European Patent Office Slovakia again belongs to the EU poorest performers, according to the respective Eurostat structural indicator.

There is an option to set policies directly aimed at making VET institutions more innovation-friendly, in particular by developing specific teaching and learning methods. There are no policies of this kind *expressis verbis*. But there are policies and initiatives doing the same indirectly. Some initiatives of this type were mentioned in chapter 7.2. The following is an example of indirect supporting of innovativeness by means of competitions. There is a long tradition of competitions in Slovakia, the novelty causing the inclusion of this example here is a recent policy aimed at orchestration of diverse competitions and interlinking them with Euroskills competition.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

National skills competitions for VET students in the process of interlinking with Euroskills

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

There is quite a long tradition in organising skills competitions in Slovakia. They are focused on diverse skills and qualifications and are organised by schools, companies, professional organisations, guilds, or in the partnership of schools with these bodies. Some competitions are of local or regional importance, some are organised at the national level (some also with qualifying rounds and a final). Components of skills competitions have been incorporated in some national competitions organised by the State Institute of Vocational Education (JUVYR, focused on students of diverse branches, ZENIT, focused on PC programming, electronics and engineering, and specialised competitions, as the Milk Competition focused on students of study/training branches in agriculture, and typing), financed by the Ministry of Education, or competitions organised in partnership with other organisations, e.g. the competition “Best Idea”, focused on electronics, organised in cooperation of the State Institute of Vocational Education, the electric power distributor Západoslovenská energetika, a.s., and UNI2010.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

The main aim of competitions is to promote skills of young people to prepare them for entering respective professions (trades, crafts) as highly-skilled professionals, to promote innovative ways of learning and acquiring new skills, to equip young people with skills for new technologies in respective fields and facilitate their transition from school to work. Moreover, the aim of competitions is to contribute to creating closer links between education and the world of work, to involve stakeholders in education process and make VET more attractive for young people.

(c) Target groups

Students of secondary schools in IVET

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

There have been traditionally many competitions organised in diverse fields, e.g. *bricklayer, painter, carpenter, metal roofer, plumber, stonemason, florist, hairdresser, cook, gardener, tailor*, etc. After a period of a lower interest of employers and professional organisations in VET in the 2000s, a more positive attitude is currently shown by these bodies towards cooperation with VET providers, including the participation or organisation of skills competitions. Under the influence of the Euroskills initiative some of them confirm the interest in inclusion of their competitions into Skills Slovakia competitions, which will entitle winners of their national competitions to apply for Euroskills. Competitions enlisted into Skills Slovakia competitions will be organised in cooperation with the State Institute of Vocational Education and will have to stick to the Skills Competition Rules, issued in

compliance with the Directive of the Ministry of Education No. 13/2009-R of 25th August 2009 on Organising, Managing and Funding Student Competitions.

Here is the list of skills competitions already included in Skills Slovakia:

Junior Nowaco Cup, a re-established skills competition organised by the Club of Young Chefs and Confectioners at the Slovak Association of Chefs and Confectioners in cooperation with NOWACO Slovakia, s.r.o., and the State Institute of Vocational Education as co-organisier; the competition is focused on young people, especially students of cookery and confectionery;

Young Mechatronic, organised by the State Institute of Vocational Education in cooperation with FESTO Slovakia, s.r.o., focused on young people and students of mechatronics;

Victoria Régia, national competition in floristry, organised by the Secondary Specialised School of Horticulture in Piešťany, focused on young professionals and students of floristry and gardening;

Hair Cup, organised by the Association of Hairdressers and Make-Up Artists of Slovakia, focused on students of hairdressing and make-up arts.

The agreements are in a process of negotiation on skills competition in **Jewellery**, organised by the Guild of Jewellers in Slovakia, skills competition in **Automotive Technicians**, organised by the Guild of Motor Trades and Repairs, and skills competition in **Fashion Design**, organised by the Secondary Specialised School of Entrepreneurship in Prešov.

There are also diverse competitions (Stonemason, Painter, Bricklayer, Metal Roofer, Joinery, Cabinetmaking) organised by guilds independently, with no links so far to Skills Slovakia. Detailed information on these competitions is not available.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

Competitions are organised at local, regional, national or sectoral level.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The cooperation between schools and businesses and associations (guilds) has a strong influence on motivation to learn of students. It has strong innovative impulses for learning process as a consequence of both comparing of students' results and discussions among VET practitioners in meetings during competition events.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure)

- Schools;
- Guilds;
- Professional associations;
- Companies;
- State Institute of Vocational Education.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available)

There have been no evaluation studies conducted, nevertheless, the impact is visible in motivation of students to stay in the field and improve their skills for their future profession.

The participation at competitions provides students with the possibility to get familiar with new technologies, as well as innovative ways of learning, and present their skills to potential employers. Employers are offered the possibility to get more involved in VET.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

No specific indicators of success have been set.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

There is a trend to include national competitions into European competitions and to stimulate national competition winners to participate in international competitions. Skills Slovakia can be cofinanced from the Ministry of Education in order to appropriately select representatives for Euroskills competitions.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

In general, there is a lack of means for organising competitions. In 2009, some of the competitions, in particular those that are to a large extent financed by private contributions, had to reduce their scope. Thus, there is a need for a greater financial support (of pre-selected activities covering regions and sectors appropriately) from public sources to secure them during crises.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

There is a need for closer cooperation between the world of education and the world of work to prepare high quality competitions in line with the requirements of labour market, employers, and current situation in sectors. It is necessary that education/schools react to these requirements in a flexible way, which is only possible in the close cooperation with employers, professional associations and guilds.

5. Source, legend

Information on competitions organised under the supervision of the State Institute of Vocational Education, www.siov.sk/odborna-tvorivost/9428s
Skills Slovakia, www.siov.sk/skills-slovakia_nazov/11055s

7.4 Encouraging partnership

Four important impulses encouraging partnership that emerged in the 2000s are worth mentioning:

- tax credits introduced after the entry into the EU and initially aimed at the compensation of reduced inflow of funding for NGOs;
- the cultural vouchers initiative of the Ministry of Culture operated for the first time in 2006;

- Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. pushing schools to be more open towards stakeholders, in particular employers' needs, in curriculum development;
- Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET inviting employers and other social partners in substantially stronger engagement in VET.

Back in the 1990s, all clever school managers established school affiliated non-profit organisations in order to escape from the financial regulation disadvantaging schools able to collect financial means. These affiliated non-profit organisations collecting money for diverse activities improving the quality of teaching/learning in a separate accountancy suddenly received a new source of funding competing with other NGOs for 2 % tax credit from inhabitants and legal bodies. Furthermore, companies with their own or cooperating non-profit organisations also started to support the education sector instead of transferring the whole tax to the tax office. It can be said that this tax incentives contributed to the innovativeness of VET institutions and encouraging partnerships via an inflow of extra-budgetary means.

In 2006, the Ministry of Culture launched a grant programme "Cultural vouchers" intended for students and teachers of basic and secondary schools entitling them to visit cultural institutions (theatres, museums, galleries, libraries, cinemas) and/or cultural events at other cultural institutions. Cultural vouchers are distributed to schools based on their applications submitted and approved by the Ministry of Culture. The initiative has continued since 2008.

According to § 7(2) of the Education Act schools have to discuss their school educational programmes with representatives of employers (e.g. respective sectoral professional association indicated in the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools and participating also at designing profiles of graduates of respective VET programmes according to the Act on VET). In contrast to dominantly education sector based innovativeness before 2008, the innovativeness induced by employers and businesses, including creative industries, but also other stakeholders in a larger extent is envisaged. It is expected that partnerships on the regional level will gradually emerge as a consequence of the decentralisation in curriculum development.

Responding to the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2008/0064(COD) and reflecting the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18th December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), the Ministry of Education prepared in January 2009 an Action Plan Creativity and Innovation: European Year 2009. Initiated by the opening conference on 7th April 2009, discussed during regional conferences in October 2009 and concluded by the final conference on 2nd December 2009 specialised national competitions for students and educators in support of creativity and innovativeness and new partnerships were promoted. Within the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 Spring Day for Europe activity, cultural diversity as the source of creativity and ICT as an important instrument of creative self-expression were promoted. Supporting regional and local strategies promoting creativity and innovation contributed to the enhancement of networking practice and direct partnership of schools. Out of about 6 500 participating schools in total, 221 schools were from Slovakia.

Strengths and weaknesses

There are many impulses in support of specific activities and partnerships with transversal effects as indicated by concrete examples also above in other subchapters of this chapter. The crucial point is how to find a balance between enthusiasm and volunteering for free on the one hand and institutional supporting and funding in support of sustainability of activities corresponding to desired publicly valued results on the other hand.

Significantly, also activities of European Year of Creativity and Innovation are at risk of decline in following years and sustainability is the weak point, similarly to any other bottom up activities permanently fighting for cofunding or even top down activities with limited time budgets. The Ministry of Education promised to maintain the Internet platform to support creativity and innovation also in the future incorporating it into the already existing portal www.modernaskola.sk. This also happened, however no additional cofunding in support of new partnerships is envisaged to come from the state budget in the following years as the continuity in the European Year of Creativity and Innovation activities is explicitly expected to be financed by respective partnerships according to the aforementioned Ministry of Education paper.

This also indicates the importance of the two aforementioned tools: 2 % tax credits and partly also cultural vouchers. It must be stressed that the option for all inhabitants and companies to funnel 2 % of their tax money is a quite unique opportunity for inhabitants to influence activities and policies of their preference, thus a strong contribution in support of direct democracy. The permanent pressure of the Ministry of Finance to abolish the tax credit instrument (see chapter 8) must be therefore seen as controversial.

Two initiatives were selected for inclusion in this chapter. The first one is an excellent example of international activity successfully implemented in Slovakia with specific value added - a very successful network and mainstreaming.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure
Mainstreaming intrapreneurship initiative: cooperation of key players in the network of training firms
Outline of the policy/measure
(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)
The international experience of training firms (with the headquarters EUROPEN – PEN International seated in Essen, Germany) has been identified as an activity inevitable for practice training of secondary students to understand the world of business and to develop entrepreneurial skills. It was found extremely important as the country faced a lack of experience in this field, caused by a long period of living under command driven economy conditions.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

In this intrapreneurship project students learn how to start own business, establish, manage and close a firm, as well as they acquire skills necessary to get employed in administration of a private firm. Training is based on simulation of all processes accompanying a firm's functioning by the Centre of Training Firms. The Centre simulates activities of Business Registry at the Court, Trade Office, Tax office, Commercial Bank, Social Insurance and Health Management Agency. Through these simulations students are exposed to an environment fully corresponding to the real business world.

A training firm behaves as a real firm within this close to the reality business world, conducting all business activities, however, with virtual money. Bankruptcy can happen as well, of course, with no impact on individuals within the firm.

(c) Target groups

- Students of secondary schools;
- University students;
- Adults, in particular unemployed registered with offices of labour;
- Teachers;
- Training firms facilitators and friends from businesses.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The State Institute of Vocational Education has been serving as the Slovak Centre of Training Firms since 1998. During this time, there were 35 training firms at commercial schools, assisted by volunteers from the University of Economics in Bratislava since 1992 through to 1997.

As of March 2010, there were in total 657 active training firms in 170 out of 490 secondary VET schools. There are also 8 training firms established at the University of Economics and two at the Technical University in Košice, and 5 continuing education institutions offer training for interested paying adults and/or for unemployed people funded by labour offices. This development indicates a boom of this initiative, originally starting with the initial support of BIBB, Germany, and a long-year assistance (1997-2001) of Austrian Centre of Training Firms (ACT) and Austrian KulturKontakt (an agency promoting and funding cultural and educational cooperation of Austria with Eastern and South East Europe countries). ACT and Kulturkontakt introduced know-how and supported the established professional Slovak Centre of Training Firms (SCTF). SCTF pre-selected 8 commercial schools from 8 regions each and established there pilot regional centres. Subsequently, people from SCTF originally trained by Austrian experts, provided training to people from regional pilot schools who later served as multipliers for further training of newly interested schools and institutions. Some pilot schools have developed to become important players.

The Commercial School, Watsonova str., Košice, has become an international player organising the annual international fair of training firms of Visegrad Four countries in Košice since 2003. The first two fairs were funded from the Visegrad Fund (established to support cooperation of four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, by funding common cultural educational and scientific projects), but gradually private firms recognising importance of this movement have started to take care about funding this fair.

Even more, this pilot school offers an example of permanent expansion in two ways:

- in attracting private firms not just to cofund annual fairs and meetings of training firms teachers and other facilitators, but also to directly cooperate with training firms.

- Individual training firms gain through these partners from the real business, enhancing this intrapreneurial project to the project with the real touch with the world of business;
- attracting new schools and colleagues from Eastern Slovakia region and also from other countries, e.g. Finland.

The Commercial School in Levice offers a different, and at the same time very valuable example of supporting community of teachers and trainers. Ms Skladanová, a head of the Club of Modern Teachers, a virtual community leader and very active blogger, supports networking of all interested teachers going beyond the regional/district border, influencing the whole community of training firms teachers. All activities (similarly to all the other subject matters) are strictly digitalised and maintained at the dedicated website and teaching/learning happens in the digitalised environment. (No traditional learning management system is used, but the administratively less demanding environment of her social group community is successfully used.)

SCTF at the State Institute of Vocational Education managed to incorporate originally free-time activity offered by schools for interested to the activity embedded into the official curriculum. A framework curriculum for an optional subject “Training Firm” at commercial schools and the subject “Training Firm - Economic Practice” in other VET schools was officially approved, valid since September 2005, to serve schools interested in introduction training firm activities into a regular study programme. Since then, schools have been free to offer these subjects to be selected by students from the list of alternative subjects. This accelerated the establishment of new training firms.

There is a large annual international fair held every November together with JUVYR (an exhibition and competition of VET schools promoting their students skills) in Bratislava. In 2009, there were 91 firms from 12 countries involved. In addition, there are two regional fairs taking place in Košice, predominantly for Eastern Slovakia, and in Žiar nad Hronom, predominantly for Central Slovakia. There are also additional regional meetings held in spring to boost training firms activities for the following period, to support face to face business training of students from firms not able to participate at the costly international fair in Bratislava.

SCTF is very strong in networking on the central level, in particular by provision of permanent support for already established firms, in particular by training and retraining of teachers necessary due to permanently changing legislation, and in supporting regional/local networkers. SCTF activities are also backed by specialists from the University of Economics, assisting in simulation of Tax Office and participating in training of teachers.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The policy is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

It is part of policies focused on entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity. Some events organised by SCTF and their partners were included among the activities of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 in Slovakia.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- State Institute of Vocational Education/Slovak Centre of Training Firms;
- University of Economics in Bratislava;

- Secondary schools and universities;
- Continuing education institutions;
- Offices of labour, social affairs and family.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

In 2006, an evaluation was conducted by SCTF. Questionnaires were distributed to teachers and students (N= 356). 80 % of students were satisfied and only 3.1 % dissatisfied with the rest neutral. In 2007, a questionnaire survey aimed at examining partnerships among real and training firms was conducted. 60 % of training firms responded that they had a partner firm in real business, assisting them in bringing training firm business activities as much as possible to the conditions of real business world. After this, SCTF strengthened its effort to create partnerships. The best experience is related to twinning partnerships. Currently, over 80 % of training firms have the real business partners (and usually also sponsors). Twinning partners are able to offer cofunding, but also equipment for running a firm and additional training at the work place. Gradually, a real firm see in a training firm also the opportunity to identify future employers.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

No specific indicators of success have been set.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

The project has been gradually mainstreamed with a remarkable boom after 2005.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Simulation of relations between training firms and relevant institutions by SCTF is done by software that is not specialised. Own MS Office based applications are used by SCTF (in particular using Access and Excel) not corresponding to real world standards, making the interaction between SCTF and firms very time consuming. Refreshment is inevitable, as e.g. Internet banking cannot be used under current terms.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

A lack of specific software commonly used by training firms hampers the efficiency in SCTF operations and cooperation with training firms. It would be necessary to provide for the software allowing the operation corresponding to the real world conditions. Currently, e.g. the simulation of Internet banking is not possible and firms have to use a snail mail service (about 80 % of operations). New software is expected to be delivered by the end of 2010.

5. Source, legend

Slovak Centre of Training Firms, www.siov.sk/slovenske-centrum-cvicnych-firiem/9429s

The second example is about top down policy making reflecting the initiatives and the pressure from trans-national organisations (UNESCO, EU) to be implemented and monitored by the government.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Concept Paper for Media Education in the Slovak Republic in the Context of Lifelong Learning

The policy was approved by the government on 16th December 2009.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason)

Elaboration of the concept for media education was declared within the Manifesto of the Slovak Government from 2006. Its development also stems from the Directive of the European Parliament and the Council No. 2007/65/EC of 11th December 2007, according to which every three years all member states are obliged to submit to the European Commission the report on the situation in media literacy. The concept reflects basic documents of EU, Council of Europe and UNESCO, as well as Slovak policies papers.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives)

Main objectives of media education in the lifelong learning context were identified as follows:

- To increase media literacy in all age groups;
- To update media competences, develop responsible and critical approach towards media, make effective use of media and new communication technologies;
- To teach individuals to take advantage of “learning” and making use of possibilities offered by new communication technologies;
- To protect children and adolescents against threats presented by media and new technologies in terms of the content and way of communication;
- To protect specific groups (specific groups of adults, seniors) against the content and services, which can threaten them due the insufficient level of their media literacy;
- To prevent from generational “communication and information” lagging (parents, teachers, specific groups of population, seniors, etc.);
- To prevent from any forms of social exclusion resulting from the insufficient level of media literacy.

The aim is to set up the Centre of Media Education (CME) within the already existing institution, the National Cultural Centre. The CME should serve as a coordinator of media education, contributing to the development of policies, conducting research and projects, and providing methodological guidance.

(c) Target groups

The concept addresses four basic levels of media education corresponding to four levels of target groups:

- Media education for pre-school age children;
- Media education for basic school pupils;
- Media education for secondary school students;
- Media education for adults.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.)

The policy was adopted in December 2009; nevertheless, many initiatives have been already launched before, as reflected by the concept.

Media education was addressed by the National Institute of Education within its project carried out in 2003-2005 resulting in the development of the concept for integration of media education into the educational content. The subsequent experiment carried out in 2005-2007 led to the proposal to include media education as an optional subject at basic schools. Currently, media education is part of the compulsory content of education at basic and secondary school. It is incorporated into the state educational programme (the frame for developing school educational programmes) as a transversal topic, which could be taught within individual subjects, or as an independent course or independent subject. The experiment was also followed by the pilot project focused on in-service teacher training aimed at enhancing media competences of teacher and respective pedagogy related to media education. The first graduates are expected in February 2010. In 2006, the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava launched a project aimed at developing the concept of media education at secondary schools. The project includes development of textbook, teaching/learning aids, etc. In January 2008 the Trans-Sectoral Expert Commission for Media Education was established at the National Institute for Education with the mission to incorporate media education issues into the educational system, in particular into the content of formal education. Currently it operates as a regular expert commission at the National Institute for Education.

Within non-formal and informal education media education has been addressed by independent institutions, civic associations, church societies and independent experts. Worth mentioning are the projects "Responsibility" (www.zodpovedne.sk) and "Help" (www.pomoc.sk), carried out by the Ministry of Interior, the eSlovensko Civic Association and the Slovak Committee for UNICEF, aimed at the development and dissemination of materials focused on prevention of harmful and criminal activities through the Internet and mobile networks. The projects are supported by the European Commission within the community programme Safer Internet Plus. The News Agency of the SR (TASR) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education has made accessible all its services for all schools since February 2009. The "TASR in School" project provides schools with the possibility to make use of all agency products within the educational process as well as to develop their own journals or web pages.

Media education has been addressed within research activities, among which a survey on media literacy among 13 to 22 year olds, conducted by the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra in 2007, could be highlighted. In 2009 IUVENTA launched a project Online Generation – Information, Communication a Digital Participation of Youth in Information Society. A survey among 13 to 30 years old young people is focused on their participation in creation, provision, sharing, communication and making use of information in the online environment.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level)

The policy is implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

The policy is part of educational policies covering formal as well as non-formal and informal education. It also reflects European policy in this field.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Culture;
- Centre of Media Education set up at the National Cultural Centre;
- Ministry of Education;
- Higher education institutions;
- Regulatory bodies;
- Audiovisual Fund (a public institution that supports and aids the development of audiovisual culture and the audiovisual industry);
- Public media;
- Church, civic associations, independent experts;
- Public, target groups, parents.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

As the policy was adopted in December 2009 no specific evaluation studies have been conducted yet. The progress report should be submitted to the government in February 2013.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

No specific indicators of success have been set.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies.

It is a national policy aimed at LLL for all, with a specific impact also on the curriculum development in regional schooling.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

The initiative is in its early stage, no substantial obstacles have been encountered so far.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Currently, media literacy is just indicated in the state educational programmes for VET schools within key competences referring to making use of information technologies, and the development of media literacy is enlisted among general competences. On the other hand, media education is addressed more specifically in the state educational programme for grammar schools and it is included there as the transversal theme. As also stated in the concept, it is therefore inevitable to develop projects addressing media education also for VET schools.

Establishing the Centre of Media Education within the National Cultural Centre is expected since 1st January 2011 to orchestrate activities of all players involved in media literacy improvement.

5. Source, legend

The paper is available at www.culture.gov.sk/uploads/9z/9U/9z9UuLgW-4Iwh72hQv9adw/vlastny_material.pdf

8. Financing VET

8.1 Improving efficiency, equity, levels of VET funding

Funding policies development

VET funding arrangements in Slovakia are very simple. IVET is dominantly funded from the state budget and CVET from the pocket of the involved players (employers or individual participants). Labour market retraining is financed from the state budget and from the ESF. Funding VET is insufficient and Slovakia is even among the EU lowest investors in the human resources as a whole, according to EU Spending on Human Resources Indicator, far behind the EU27 average. The Ministry of Finance data (see chapter 1 for more details) illustrates a severe decrease in the expenditure on education in the percentage of the GDP, from 4.75 % in 1995 down to 3.93 % in 2008.

Although national authorities have declared their commitment in policy documents (National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic, adopted by the government on 19th December 2001, and consequently passed by the parliament) to increase public expenditure on education to a minimum of 5 % until 2006 and to a minimum of 6 % until 2010, this policy was revised under the priority to reduce the state budget deficit. Although the Stability Programme of the Slovak Republic for 2008-2012 adopted by the government on 29th April 2009 also declared education and knowledge society among priorities, the indicated increase of future expenditures is dominantly based on an increased drawing from EU structural funds. No obligatory improvements from public budgets are envisaged, which would compensate long-term underfinancing. Nevertheless, also within this document expenditures on education were again identified as sensitive to population ageing, and the estimation of decrease in expenditures induced by demographic changes in the percentage of the GDP from 3.7 in 2004 to 3.0 in 2010 and 2.2 in 2020, according to the 2006 Economic Policy Committee and the European Commission-DG ECFIN “Ageing Report”, is quoted there. Thus, very likely, a decrease of population will not be translated into the increase of per capita funding and subsequently into the improvement of the educational environment damaged in “dry years” of economy and not improved in a short period of a solid growth. Very likely, the continuation of the insufficient investment in human resources from public budgets has to be expected due to the ongoing economic crisis.

A low investment from public money, corresponding to low 19 % income and corporate taxes, is not compensated by private VET funding. A debate about additional funding mechanisms, with clear incentives to private subjects positive towards funding VET, goes back to the early 1990s. Initially, a train-or-pay VET fund was considered appropriate, and later, tax relieves were proposed, however, without success. Here are two examples of policy papers addressing this issue.

The National Action Plan of Employment for 2004–2006 explicitly mentioned recommendations of the Council of the EU on “more effective investment in human capital and lifelong learning” and “greater incentives to invest in training and to facilitate access to education”, and proposed i.a. a tax relief scheme for employers, aimed at increasing their investment in training of their employees. There is no impact in practice visible.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted in 2007 suggested the introduction of financial tools for the development of LLL in its measure 8.15. Backed by the

respective Government Resolution No. 382/2007 related to the Strategy, asking in its part B12 the Ministry of Education to introduce financial instruments in support of LLL, as well as by a study analysing the models of sharing costs of learning/training in EU in order to identify the best suitable instrument in support of learning of citizens, the Ministry of Education introduced tax deductible expenses within the draft Act on Lifelong Learning: 20 % of declared expenditures on lifelong learning, purchased by an income tax payer and provided by an accredited educational institution, should have become a tax deductible expense.

There were two strong opponents of this proposal. The National Union of Employers required deleting the respective paragraph, refusing it as a non-systemic intervention into the 19 % flat tax system. A flat tax reform was accompanied by the pressure to reduce exemptions to the minimum, and therefore, this kind of proposals is seen as contradictory to the reform. The Ministry of Finance opposed it due to the impact on reduction of income tax revenue available for redistribution, as municipalities were envisaged to receive 70.3 % and self-governing regions 23.5 % from the total amount of centrally collected income tax. The government rejected the proposal, in order to prevent from endangering future budgets incomes.

The debate on incentives continues, as Slovakia is far from the 2010 LLL benchmark. There were just 3.3 % adults in LLL in 2008 in contrast to 12.5 % of 2010 EU benchmark and in contrast to the national 2015 LLL benchmark set up to 15 %. Moreover, this indicator has been in a gradual decrease since the top 4.6 % in 2005. Nevertheless, the debate is dominated by two basic fundamentals of all Slovak governments. The efficient tax policy is considered incompatible with any kind of tax related incentives for VET/LLL, and governments are unable to reduce the government costs and/or redirect more resources to investment in education, LLL and R&D at the expense of other public expenditures. The Ministry of Finance opposes all proposals for tax incentives in support of IVET and/or continuing VET for individuals considering flat tax reform introducing 19 % tax rate for VAT, income tax and corporate tax a sufficient stimulus for encouraging private investment in human resources and/or own education. The only exception was the adoption in 2007 of a measure enabling the medical staff to include their costs of continuing training into tax deductibles (for further details see Parliament Breaks a Taboo: Tax Incentives for Lifelong Learning. In: Cedefop Info 1/2008). The government was sensitive to the Ministry of Health's suggestion in the light of the brain drain of medical staff to better paying EU countries and there was no crisis visible back in 2007. The government disregarded the criticism of the National Bank of Slovakia and the Ministry of Finance and decided to adopt a measure prepared by the Ministry of Health aimed at the stimulation of continuing professional development of medical staff in order to fill the gap in specialists. The measure has been valid since 1st January 2008, thus, tax deduction applied for the 2008 fiscal year (with tax reporting deadline 31st March 2009) for the first time. Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on Provision of Health Care, Medical Staff and Medical Professional Organisations and Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on Income Tax were amended by Act No. 653/2007 Coll. This act enables medical doctors, dentists, nurses, and obstetric nurses/midwives to include the costs of the continuing training into tax deductibles. A decree of the Ministry of Health No. 31/2006 Coll. sets upper limits of training fees relevant to the respective types of training of respective medical staff categories. As a consequence of the 19 % income tax rate, the spending of trainees of study programmes, set and accredited by the Ministry of Health, is reduced by about one fifth. Tax incentives for CVET for individuals from other professions are not applied.

Within the Ministry of Culture grant programme the "Cultural vouchers" mentioned in chapter 7.4 vouchers are distributed to schools. In 2009, one set of cultural vouchers for one student/teacher consisted of 6 vouchers (each voucher for EUR 1, total EUR 6), of which just one could have been used for visiting a cinema, the rest for other cultural events, including

specialised one and agreed among stakeholder for specific purpose, among which visiting natural science or technical museum or other event contributing to informal learning can have an impact on future decisions and performance of respective individual in VET.

There are no other examples of vouchers or schemes using specific instruments, such as learning accounts, directly or indirectly related to VET.

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET introduced a new VET Development Fund. In contrast to a levy-type fund known from other EU countries and promoted by a professional audience, this Fund is considered a non-standard one. It cannot receive contributions from state authorities and the contribution from businesses is strictly on a voluntary basis. The Ministry of Finance strictly opposed creating a Fund lowering state or public budgets' income, and employers, not compensated by any kind of incentive, accepted only non-obligatory contributions. This fund is seen controversially, as a lack of means is expected under the current terms. In addition, VET schools are afraid of worsening their possibilities to earn directly from businesses. Currently, schools fight for contributions from businesses based on a specific tax credit measure, originally introduced to support NGOs. Schools created affiliated NGOs in order to apply for additional funding, i.a. from 2 % tax assignment (see the detailed explanation later) from the income tax and corporate tax. Many schools are very successful in attracting subjects with a special interest (parents, businesses from a similar sector, etc.). Schools are afraid that political manipulation might result in funnelling funding from businesses to the VET fund instead directly to them. This is also about the 2 % tax assignment, for receiving of which this Fund has been additionally entitled according to the Act on VET. Furthermore, 2 % tax assignment will be gradually lowered for legal subjects since 2010 till 2018 tax years. In 2011 and 2012, a legal subject will be allowed for 2 % tax assignment just in case it provides a gift (financial means) equal to 0.5 % of paid tax. Otherwise, it will be allowed to assign just 1.5 %. In 2013 to 2015, the tax assignment will be lowered to 1.5% in case the subject will provide a gift equal to 1 % of paid tax. Otherwise, the tax assignment will be just 1 %. In 2016 to 2019, the tax assignment will be 1 % in case of a gift equal to 1.5 % of paid tax. Otherwise, the tax credit will be just 0.5 %. Since 2019, the tax credit will be 0.5 %, without any condition to provide a gift.

The Ministry of Finance was for a long period dissatisfied with these tax incentives, arguing that many corporates set up affiliated NGOs in order to keep the respective amount of tax money under their control and that this instrument, originally intended in support the genuine NGOs facing a decrease in international funding after entering European Union, is not used for the original purpose. On the other hand, there is no evidence that corporate affiliated NGOs used collected means inappropriately. Instead of rethinking an instrument for public monitoring of allocation of means by respective recipients of tax assignment, the Ministry of Finance enforced its traditional policy to simplify the tax system and reduce exceptions. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Finance is not able to understand the contribution of tax assignment to the cohesion in society and interlinking communities of common interest able to achieve positive results without supervision of the central government. EUR 50 million was reallocated via tax credit in 2008. After reducing tax credit to 1.5 % in 2011, EUR 7 million has been expected to enrich the state budget, according to the Ministry of Finance estimation.

Some details on funding IVET

The first legislative norm introducing the financing of regional schools based on allocation formulae was Act No. 506/2001 Coll. Originally aimed at introducing a “per capita” funding,

it has been changed in the parliament to “per class” funding to prevent from endangering little schools from rural, low populated areas and minority schools. A new Act No. 597/2003 Coll. finally introduced a per capita funding (see the example below) and increased the importance of self-governing bodies in financing and distributing funds for regional schools, as they were also made responsible for establishing and maintaining schools.

Since January 2004, all primary and secondary schools (of respective category established for the purpose of budgeting) were funded equally through per capita funding from the state budget, regardless of their ownership status, in order to encourage the establishment of non-state schools. Furthermore, funding flows and sources gradually started to change in line with the progress of decentralisation.

From 2005, fiscal decentralisation came into force through redefinition of the income tax revenue. Although centrally collected, the essential part of income tax goes from the Ministry of Finance directly to self-governing bodies to cover their expenditures: 70.3 % was earmarked for municipalities, 23.5 % for self-governing regions and 6.2 % out of the total income tax remained with the state as a reserve. Municipalities and regions also became responsible for setting tax rates for some other taxes (of which the property tax was the most important for municipalities and the tax from automotive vehicles for self-governing regions). Nevertheless, the directly collected income is just about 20 %, while the transferred part of the personal income tax is about the 80 % of all tax income of both types of self-governing bodies.

The decentralisation reform differentiated between the so-called original and transferred competences in state administration. Original competences are to be borne by the budget of self-governing bodies, while transferred competences entitle them to require additional funding from the state budget. Financing secondary VET institutions belong to transferred competences, and therefore self-governing regions and municipalities are entitled to receive additional contribution from the state budget (from the budget chapter of the Ministry of Education).

In contrast to the earlier practice sensitive to lobbying of regional players at the Ministry of Education and directors of schools on regional/local level, the new scheme contributed to both transparency and efficiency of funding schools. It allowed for estimation of the future inflow of means, and per capita funding increased the pressure to close schools and/or programmes not able to attract students. It contributed to merging of schools and to restructuring of the network of programmes. On the other hand, it led to weakening of the quality, as schools concentrated on quantity - hunting for heads bringing per capita normative, instead of the quality of graduates. Furthermore, closing state/public schools opened the door for the establishment of private and church affiliated schools in the same premises, enjoying the entitlement to equal normatives as public schools.

At the very beginning, VET schools seriously suffered from a lack of sensitivity, as four normatives (corresponding to four categories) were assigned for all VET schools. This categorisation made substantial difference only between the former secondary vocational schools (with a dominant share of ISCED 3C programmes), expected to earn from the productive work of students and therefore only partly financed from the state budget (hence called contributory organisations), and the former secondary specialised schools (providing almost exclusively ISCED 3A programmes), dominantly financed from state budget (hence called budgetary organisations). All former secondary vocational schools were funded equally by the same normative, regardless of real costs of study. There were different normatives,

partly reflecting costs of study, set only for three categories of former secondary specialised schools, for conservatoires, for schools of arts and health schools (equal), and all other former secondary specialised schools were funded by means of the same normative. Categorisation was gradually refined to 25 categories in 2009 (plus one for conservatoires, threaded as not belonging to VET schools by new legislation) and 27 categories (plus one for conservatoires) in 2010. In addition, one category has been assigned for centres of practical training, and two categories for VET schools for children with special educational needs.

Furthermore, Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, primarily focusing on the involvement of employers in programming and provision of VET, introduced also changes in financing VET. In addition to the aforementioned disputable VET Development Fund that was intended

- to improve the equipment of VET schools and VET establishments; and
- for training of VET schools teachers and trainers; and instructors at work places;

the act also clarified conditions of cofinancing IVET by enterprises.

According to § 12(2) and (3), students can receive a motivation scholarship from a future employer (according to the contract on training for agreed qualification and future employment). The scholarship is provided monthly during the school days up to 65 % of subsistence minimum, depending on student's school achievements. This scholarship is not intended just to stimulate increasing the achievement of students, but also to attract them to enter study fields preparing for professions lacking in the labour market or needed by a specific employer. Employers can make a contract on future employment with students who have reached the age of 15.

According to § 12(4) to (6), students can receive from the entity contracted by the school a remuneration for productive work, performed within practical training, equal to 50-100 % of minimum wage, corresponding to the quality of work.

According to § 13(2), employers can cover the following costs to the students who have made an employment contract with them:

- meal costs, in amount set by the Labour Code;
- accommodation costs in school dormitories up to 45 % of subsistence minimum;
- travel costs in public means of transport for travelling between the place of living, dormitory, school and a place of practical training, up to 65 % of subsistence minimum for a calendar month.

According to § 13(3), the provider of practical training, contracted by the school, has to provide students with personal protective equipment

Specific costs of training were clearly indicated as tax deductibles by this act amending the Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on Income Tax. This might contribute to an increased involvement of employers, as previously employers cofinancing IVET in a similar way were at risk of being penalised by tax offices due to the unclear legislation in this field.

Funding CVET

Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education, valid till the early 2010, listed the sources for financing "further" - continuing education, however, without setting rules for securing the funding. The payments of participants, means of employers, state budget subsidies, etc., were not specified either. Furthermore, only few institutions report systematically on their CVET

activities. Therefore, the table below presents the distribution of means rather than the absolute numbers. It represents the distribution of sources for financing CVET in 1997-2008, resulting from a CVET providers' survey, conducted on an annual basis by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

Table 8.1: Distribution of sources of financing CVET* in 2002-2008 (in % and 1000s EUR)

Type of sources	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	1000s EUR
State budget subsidies	24	23	36.36	21.34	23.82	25.88	14.68	6 939.36
Employers	13	14	13.34	22.04	23.83	18.44	25.93	12 253.06
Trainees	43	38	39.30	35.09	25.46	38.70	28.97	13 687.97
Labour offices	10	8	7.07	9.15	4.00	2.65	4.41	2 081.69
Donations of natural and legal persons	2	2	0.46	0.23	-	-	-	0.00
Municipalities	-	-	-	2.11	2.33	3.02	1.70	805.00
Foundations	-	-	-	-	0.78	1.36	0.97	460.66
EU funds	-	-	-	-	14.61	7.95	21.56	10 189.67
Others	8	15	3.47	10.03	5.17	1.99	1.77	838.52
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	47 255.93

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 33.014 as of 31st December 2008

* data from well-disciplined institutions and at the same time the most important providers (in total 4 743 institutions were addressed, 641 responded, of which 521 declared provision of education in 2008); data does not cover part-time studies in formal education, respective data is collected by annual reporting of IVET institutions.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted in 2007 reiterated again the introduction of financial tools for the development of LLL, and subsequently, the Ministry of Education introduced fiscal incentives into the draft act on LLL, but without final success, as already commented earlier in more detail. It is very likely that in the nearest period funding for CVET/LLL will remain neither regulated nor fiscally promoted by any specific legislation.

There are no specific measures and even no reliable statistical data on funding of CVT in enterprises. The only official research data are from the 1990s from a research team that does not exist anymore. As Slovakia did not participate in the international survey CVTS 2, the first reliable EU comparable data about enterprise-based CVET is from CVTS3 available at the Eurostat portal. The national analysis of CVTS3 results announced for 2009 is pending.

The aggregate data indicates that the share of training enterprises is close to EU27 data and it confirms the earlier assumption that the share of training enterprises increases with the size class of enterprises, similarly to other EU countries. Large enterprises offer more training opportunities than SMEs, usually due to the introduction of already developed investor's training culture into privatised enterprises. This also very likely explains the comparably higher costs of CVT in comparison with the total labour costs in the segment of large companies, as visible below.

Table 8.2: Total costs of CVT sources as % of total labour cost (all enterprises), by size class in 2005

	Total	10 to 49	50 to 249	250 or more
EU27	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.9
Slovakia	1.8	1	1.3	2.4

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS3, 2005)

The following table confirms the need to support CVT by specific measures, as the share of enterprises indicating the impact of public measures is very low. In particular, financial incentives are very rare. In fact, only strategic investors received them within the state aid incentives aimed at attracting them to settle in Slovakia.

Table 8.3: Enterprises with the impact of public measures on their CVT plans as % for all training enterprises in 2005

	anpms	pbfad	finsib	txreli	prstd	prcer
EU27	36	9	17	10	11	20
Slovakia	21	4	2	1	6	18

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS3, 2005)

Notes: anpms - Any public measure, pbfad - Publicity-funded advisory service aimed at identifying training needs and/or developing training plans, finsib - Financial subsidies towards the costs of training persons employed, txreli - Tax relief on expenditure on training persons employed, prstd - Procedures to ensure the standards of trainers (e.g. by national registers, assessment), prcer - Provision of recognised standards and frameworks for qualification and certification

Funding labour market training for unemployed people

In 2002 and 2003, active labour market policies (ALMP) were regulated by Act No. 387/1996 Coll. on Employment. Two ALMP instruments (corresponding to § 82 and § 84) were aimed at training of registered unemployed and retraining of employees. This training was funded by the National Labour Office, a public legal body responsible for public employment services, and its budget independent from the state budget.

Table 8.4: Active labour market policies in 2002 and 2003

ALMP tools	ALMP in 2002		ALMP in 2003	
	Budget assigned (in EUR)	People affected	Budget assigned (in EUR)	People affected
§ 82	10 494 950.90	48 143	4 904 197.11	24 711
§ 84	297 375.10	1 513	47 941.59	329
Total*	95 225 141.33	144 083	46 044 772.16	57 835

Source: National Labour Office and Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (2003 data)

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 41.16 as of 31st December 2003

§ 82 - Re-training of Registered Unemployed, § 84 - Re-training of Employees

* including other 12 instruments set in the act

Numbers of people in retraining represented 5.6 % of the registered unemployed in 2003, decreasing from 9.4 % in 2002, back to the level of 2001. Since the late 1990s, the expenditure on labour market training was not of substantial importance either in a budgetary volume or in the number of trained individuals (except for 2002). Training for unemployed people was not considered an efficient tool for fighting unemployment, as a consequence of the high dead weight and a low absorption of the labour market. The job creation in the economy was insufficient.

In 2004, a state-managed network of offices of labour, social affairs and family was established (replacing the public legal National Labour Office), headed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and subordinated to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Since then, the ESF has become the crucial source of funding for training of unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, substantially complementing the insurance means inflowing via the state budget (that were not directly collected and redistributed anymore by a public employment body, as was the case of the National Labour Office). Since then, labour market policies have become regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and financed from the state budget via the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as well as from the European Social Fund.

The following table offers the list of active labour market policies related to VET (and corresponding to § 46, § 47 and § 51, see the explanation below the table), according to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, and their results in 2004 to 2008.

Table 8.5: Funding active labour market policies in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2009

ALMP tools	People affected				Budget assigned (in EUR)			
	2004	2007	2008	2009	2004	2007	2008	2009
§ 46	27 208	8 890	12 143	17 924	5 455 898.5	1 923 460.1	3 725 447	5 841 205
§ 47	- *	12 537	13 863	29 921	- *	7 097 743.8	8 501 070	30 642 711
§ 51	14 462	8 937	7 451	11 764	5 152 065.6	2 526 441.7	4 815 714	10 989 976
Total**	273 354	304 249	264 801	208 016	50 789 976.9	77 601 404.9	123 688 505	162 181 943

Source: Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 38.796 as of 31st December 2004; EUR 1 = SKK 33.603 as of 31st December 2007; 2008 and 2009 data offered in EUR by Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

§ 46 Education and training for the labour market of the unemployed job seekers and employed job seekers, § 47 Education and training for the labour market of employee, § 51 Contribution for the graduate practice

* not implemented

** including also additional tools listed in the act

The importance of funding activities from ESF is visible from the following decomposition: Only training of 46 retrained interested people was financed from the state budget, while 12 046 unemployed and 51 other retrained were financed from ESF National Project IIIA, out of total 12 143 retrained people (§ 46), indicated in the table above. Training of all 13 863 employees (§ 47) was financed from ESF National Project XI. Only 1 481 of all graduates placed in Graduate practice (§ 51) were financed from the state budget, while the dominant part from ESF National Programme IX.

Since 2008, employment services have been heavily influenced by the crisis and the inflow of registered unemployed. The country has to encounter a huge increase of costs for passive labour market policy, as the number of unemployed has risen dramatically. Similarly, active labour market policies were much more needed: in 2009, 17 816 unemployed job seekers and 108 employed job seekers (with the agreed costs of EUR 5 841 205), thus, in total 17 924 people were retrained in contrast to 12 143 in 2008 (according to § 46), and training for 29 921 employees was financed (EUR 30 642 711 according to § 47) to prevent them from unemployment or to increase their employability, in contrast to 13 863 (according to § 47) in 2008. Furthermore, 11 764 registered unemployed graduates were placed to the Graduate practice (§ 51) with state budget costs of EUR 10 989 976, in contrast to 7 451 graduates in 2008.

The ESF Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources and the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 in years 2004-2006 (finally lasting till May 2009)

are followed by the Operational Programme Education and Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion for the 2007-2013 programming period. A new bunch of national projects was designed for the new ESF programming period. The national project aimed at education and training for job seekers, interested in job change, as well as employees, replacing the former National Projects III, IIIA and XI, are expected to cofinance respective policies (see chapter 8.3 for some details).

Graduate practice (school leaver's job experience) is not to be financed from the European money anymore, and therefore, the follow up to National Project IX will not be prepared. On the other hand, the government considers the graduate practice an important tool for fighting graduate unemployment. Therefore, additional funding from the state budget and even more friendly conditions for enrolment were agreed.

Strengths and weaknesses

There is no particular strength worth highlighting. It can be, however, stated that financing IVET dominantly from the state budget makes IVET less vulnerable to the impact of crisis, in contrast to systems financing apprentice practical training from the business sector. Thus, public financing of secondary IVET can be seen as an anticyclical stabilizer. On the other hand, Slovak IVET is permanently underfinanced and the dominant financing from the public money and a low share of private financing contributed to the current mismatch visible at the labour market. Per capita financing of regional schooling (see the example below) substantially increased the efficiency of provision of regional education, including IVET, in fiscal terms, however, due to a failure to introduce quality assurance instruments it contributed both to the preference of schools for satisfying students' and parents' desires regardless of the labour market situation and the lower quality of graduates. Thus, per capita funding contributed to the malformation of the regional schooling as a whole, and in particular of the secondary VET system, as no other financial instruments in support of IVET have been introduced. Both tax incentives and establishment of levy-based fund were rejected by governments pushing employers to invest in VET from the profit money. This contributed to underfinancing of VET. Furthermore, no correctives were implemented to prevent from an outflow from ISCED 3C programmes to ISCED 3A programmes. As a consequence of insufficient quality checking of graduates, grammar schools and ISCED 3A programmes of VET schools attractive for parents and students expanded disproportionally, lowering the quality standards of graduates. A decrease in the numbers and variety of ISCED 3C graduates contributed to the lack of craftsmen in the labour market.

With regard to CVET/LLL, the Ministry of Education repeatedly tried to introduce some fiscal incentives to stimulate individuals to enter it. As explained in detail above, the government finally rejected the proposal to allow for 20 % tax deduction in the draft Act on LLL, creating conditions discriminating some professions compared to some selected medical professions. As explained in more detail in the aforementioned article in Cedefop Info, tax incentives were accepted for CVET for specific medical staff in order to fill the gap with regard to provision of healthcare. Undoubtedly, this is not a systemic solution, as making CVET cheaper for promising professionals does not make them more positive to enter positions in Slovak hospitals instead of better paid positions abroad. Although there are doubts about the efficiency of this measure, there is no evidence about this. It would be very helpful to conduct an evaluation study. No doubts, this measure is at risk of violation of the Constitution and the Ministry of Health would hardly manage to break the resistance of the Ministry of Finance under current crisis marked conditions.

Active labour market instruments heavily depend on the ESF sources, as demonstrated by the 2008 data above. Dependency on the ESF makes ALMP extremely vulnerable, and paradoxically, it contributes to insufficient efficiency. Traditionally, there are problems with the ALMP impact assessment. Placement data after completion of training or practice do not make a difference. Thus, there are no estimations of dead weights with regard to labour market training and graduate practice available. It is very positive that a new National Project XXI-2, starting in 2009, should address the impact assessment and efficiency of ALMP tools.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

New funding mechanisms of regional schooling including VET schools: per capita “normatives”.

Implemented by Act No. 597/2003 Coll., valid since 1st January 2004, later amended and annually complemented by detailed provisions.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale (why was the policy/measure introduced? Explain (inter)national context, reason).

Originally, financing regional schools was based on negotiation (sensitive to lobbying) at two levels

- between the Ministry of Education and respective regional authorities; and subsequently
- between regional authorities and respective schools;

while lower levels always fought for ad hoc increasing of budgets in contrast to preceding year by creative and sophisticated reasoning (even regardless the reality) and upper levels always explained that the increase is not possible due to a lack of means (again even regardless the reality, however limited, due to the education unfriendly policy of government, and of course with some sensitivity to exceptions). This practice was a residuum of the command economy practice of “soft budget constraints” calculating with practice (and in fact encouraging it) of organisations, even commercial ones, to demand creatively additional resources from the state budget. It must be, however, stressed that Slovakia’s investment in education was below capacity of its economy strength, as can be demonstrated by the shamefully low share of expenditures on education per capita compared to GDP per capita (see e.g. Table 2.5 in the 2004 UNDP Millennium Development Goals report).

As some authorities disliked such conditions and have already developed formulae for allocation of means to increase transparency (e.g. the World Bank expert praised the allocation mechanism of the Bratislava Region used in the 2000s before the introduction of the reform) the situation was ready for an agreement on a new policy. Furthermore, discrepancies in financing schools under conditions of permanently decreasing numbers of students caused an increase of inequality in budgeting; inefficiency in some schools and harsh insufficiency in others. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance needed to introduce restrictive fiscal policy and looked for an appropriate instrument.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets (qualitative or quantitative objectives).

The main aims of the policy were to

- increase transparency in allocation of means;
- set mechanism compatible with progressing decentralisation;
- impose hard budget constraints on schools, which similarly to any other public sector

organisations were used to exceed their budgets hoping in final bailing out from the state budget;

- support establishing private and church affiliated schools (as state budget per capita contributions were set equally regardless of the ownership of schools).

(c) Target groups

- Central, regional, local educational authorities;
- Schools.

(d) Status of implementation, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The policy is implemented, with annual changes in setting state budget per capita contributions (per capita “normatives”).

The current expenditure normative is a sum of two normatives (wage and operational); the wage normative is the same for all schools within the same category, the range in operational normatives is in detail regulated according to specific variables (one of variables was represented by eight climate categories with different heating requirements).

The following were categories of secondary schools: grammar schools, secondary specialised schools (SSS) except those for health and arts, the latter belonging to a separate category with higher normative, conservatoires, all secondary vocational schools (SVS), centres of practical training and secondary schools for students with special needs. Hence, almost all secondary specialised schools regardless their profile and cost demands were fiscally treated equally. Similarly, all SVS were also treated equally with only about 20 % higher normative compared to secondary specialised schools. This classification has gradually changed, however, low sensitivity to the difference between VET schools remained a source of permanent criticism of normatives. In 2010, there are 31 categories instead of originally 6 categories covering all kinds of VET schools, including those for children with special educational needs.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

The policy was implemented nation-wide.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

A similar policy was introduced earlier in financing higher education. The policy was in line with the Ministry of Finance general policy aimed at capping public spending; known as an effort to replace “soft budget constraints” by “hard budget constraints” using at that time very popular Janos Kornai explanations. The policy was also in line with the other large reform aimed at “decentralisation and modernisation of public administration” (see the example of initiative in chapter 8.4).

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of Education;

- Regional/local educational authorities.

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

No doubts

- transparency has been increased;
- regional/local authorities are served by a clear mechanism, however, some reservations towards the model of fiscal decentralisation dominantly based on centrally collected personal income tax (instead of an appropriate tax mix) must be expressed;
- a number of private and church affiliated schools increased (while the number of public schools decreased); and in particular
- the Maastricht criteria have been met and Euro introduced in Slovakia in 2009.

All that is indicating a big success, at least from the Ministry of Finance's point of view.

The aforementioned positive impact of the reform is in hard contrast with the negative impact on provision of education, as the Ministry of Education failed to balance the dominant fiscal reform by educational reforms and as it failed to resist to insufficiently hard cuts in financing educational institutions in the Ministry of Finance effort to reduce public expenditures:

- Quality of education is insufficient, as also confirmed by poor results in PISA 2006 and high youth unemployment rate; and therefore, a quality assurance reform is urgently needed;
- Not per capita funding itself, but accompanying restrictive policy interrelated with this reform caused the deep underfinancing of schools resulting in modernisation deficit: Slovakia is among EU members with the lowest total public expenditure on education in a percentage of GDP (3.85 % compared to 5.03 % of EU27 in 2007, according to Eurostat).

(b) Indicators of success

No explicit indicators of success were set by the Ministry of Education, while the Ministry of Finance was clear in efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit, meet all Maastricht criteria and set the country on track to adopt euro as soon as possible.

(c) Integration of outcomes into (a) larger (national, sectoral, regional, local) policy/ies

The policy was national, but it heavily influenced networks of schools and programmes regionally and sectorally by its cost-saving "rationalisation" effect.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Schools and their establishers were stimulated to cost saving measures regardless the impact on the quality of their service: The reform stimulated to maximisation of students enrolment up to the capacity of the facility, disregarding other factors. Schools were also stimulated to prefer demand of parents/students over the demand of employers and they tended to follow desires of former over the needs of latter. With a weak regulation of the quality on output, schools disregarded the quality checking on input and accepted almost everybody to

improve their budgets. Consequently to the missing counterbalancing measures, a number of graduates from ISCED 3C programmes dramatically decreased and in some professions workers are urgently missing. Replacement by graduates of schools is not expectable under current terms, as guidance and counselling is still only partly able to influence parents'/students' choice of schools confused by a severe malformation in the labour market in the 1990s.

Although financing per capita is a standard measure, implementation without other correcting measures (stronger quality management, improved career guidance and counselling, incentives for cooperation between schools and enterprises, etc.) turned this measure to an example of ill practice due to incoherence in policies. The secondary school system (including the IVET system) driven by this policy evolved inappropriately resulting in a decrease of quality of ISCED 3A education and a lack of ISCED 3C skilled workers, who are preferably demanded by currently booming sectors of economy.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Financing VET must be revisited; in particular

- “normatives” should be revised in order to guarantee at least standard EU teaching/learning environment; a variety of IVET programmes should be reflected within this revision instead of VET schools as a whole;
- quality assurance must be interlinked with financing to prevent from headhunting for enrolment regardless the quality of graduates;
- additional fiscal incentives (partial improvement introduced by the Act on VET is insufficient) for co-financing VET by businesses should be introduced, in particular to better align IVET to labour market needs;
- a projected gradual decline in investment in education reflecting just a population decline and disregarding from a modernisation debt in education should be rethought while keeping the Slovakia's Stability Programme for 2008-2012 intention to consolidate the general government deficit below the level of 3 % of GDP in 2012 and to achieve the fiscal balance by 2015.

5. Source, legend

Act No. 597/2003 Coll.,

www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/597_2003.pdf

8.2 Use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds

Two following tables offer an overview about the participation and financing of the respective LLLP and the earlier Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes.

Table 8.6: Number of applications submitted and selected within respective activities in 2000-2009

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	sub	sel	Sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	Sel	sub	sel	sub	sel	sub	sel
Projects (LdV & Socrates)	41	2	35	4	17	5	14	2	21	4	13	4	18	4	11	7	18	7	11	6
Partnerships	0	0	155	97	174	126	214	136	266	211	364	252	428	290	485	200	249	111	227	122
Networks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mobility projects	52*	29*	137	103	150	102	130	72	288	214	311	221	130*	110*	113	90	126	90	209	104
Individual mobility grants															470	244	492	263	448	327

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

Note: * Leonardo data only, sub – submitted, sel – selected,

Table 8.7: Grants allocated for respective programmes in 2000-2009 (in EUR)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Arion*		14304	14229	16406	45676	45529	46419	17983	9220	28608.4
Comenius		643743	807803	595444	1434762	1533896	1716783	1802417.7	1905506	2159822
Grundtvig		66185	85992	101049	206115	302612	479672	469906	497102	585892.5
Erasmus	992086	1030056	1041773	1796977	2077409	2355827	9294128	3923621	4319750	4691670
Leonardo procedure B**	354015	1016609	1057540	367144	821868	1043174	1189161	1097940	1155145	891700
Leonardo procedure A***	829864	853669	914772	938000	1511927	1845281	2123106	2006406	2101855	2435600
Leonardo partnerships									164000	234700

Source: SAAIC, LLLP National Agency

Notes: * Since 2007 Study visits

** Leonardo procedure B (pilot projects, language competences, transnational networks), since 2007 Transfer of Innovation projects

*** Leonardo procedure A (mobility projects), since 2007 named Mobility projects; the amounts include means allocated for preparatory visits

The most important for VET are Leonardo da Vinci projects. There were in total 20 Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects (2000-2006) and 20 Transfer of Innovations projects (2007-2009) selected for funding. Although these projects stuck to calls and the national priorities fully corresponded to the European Union Leonardo da Vinci priorities, it must be stated that no substantial systemic impact on VET can be seen. It is partly caused by project contents per se, but also by the lacking interest of decision makers to see the Leonardo da Vinci as a laboratory for implementation of new ideas. As already indicated within chapter 3.2 and similarly to mobilities, the intercultural dimension played a dominant role. Individual participants have seen LLLP as an opportunity to learn from other cultures and foreign professional experience. In fact, professional enrichment is limited individually or institutionally and no substantial learning process on the national level occurred based on this kind of experience. It is therefore not possible to indicate VET areas that particularly benefited from the EU support. It can be however stated that two sectors benefited from the Leonardo da Vinci programme due to the activity of sectoral players. It is the agricultural sector supported by the University of Agriculture in Nitra and a sectoral training institution Agroinstitute, and the mechanical engineering sector due to the power of this sector in the

national economy. Content related, the most attractive were language acquisition, ICT, and management. Hotel academies and commercial schools belonged to the most active in mobility.

Since the early 2000s, programmes suffered from instability in supporting the national agency by national authorities. The Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC) has been contracted by the Ministry of Education since 2001 to serve as the national agency for Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, and since 2007 for the LLP. Being independent from the government, the agency is very flexible in management, however, more vulnerable concerning cofinancing from the state budget. In fact, lower matching of means initially planned by the European Commission, caused by the lower level of cofinancing from national sources, resulted in lower EU funding by EUR 767 000, according to the National Report on Implementation and Impact of the Socrates a Leonardo da Vinci Programme in the Slovak Republic 2000-2006. On the other hand, it must be stated that financing and cofinancing is not the substantial obstacle for improvement in participation at Leonardo da Vinci projects, as visible from the 2007-2009 data in both tables above. There is no dramatic surplus of quality projects. In opposite, the agency has to promote participation vigorously and has to permanently state a lack of quality proposals. In fact, the initially allocated means for transfer of innovation projects are sufficient, with the exception in 2009, when means were reallocated to mobility projects due to the lack of quality transfer of Innovation projects.

Strengths and weaknesses

The LLP provides for two important internationalisation effects.

LLP mobilities contribute to VET improvement based on informal activities and peer learning with a direct impact on participating individuals and institutions. Also, they have a huge impact potential, provided the mainstreaming of diverse bottom up activities, induced by confrontations of domestic and foreign experience, is supported by national policies. Unfortunately, this has not been the case so far.

Transfer of Innovation projects and similar predecessors offer a unique option to join European initiatives, and learn from multi-partisan experience. Unfortunately, although national calls' priorities correspond with European priorities, impact of projects remain usually isolated. In particular, the experience gained within the projects aimed at respective Copenhagen tools remained insufficiently reflected by decision makers. Undoubtedly, it is due to lagging behind the majority of EU countries in the reflection of Copenhagen process by the Ministry of Education, which was preoccupied with internal daily concerns and with time consuming legislative work resulting in a fully new legislative fundament.

Thus, although the current programming practice and promotion of programme activities do not need substantial changes, a specific attention should be paid to capitalisation from completed projects: Dissemination of results

- should be based on the easy to read standardised description of products of good practice examples and possibilities of their use, supplemented by national dissemination supporting instruments;
- should be supported by an improved inflow of information about centralised projects, as the national agency suffers from a lack of information about these projects that are of crucial importance, if there is a Slovak participation or participation from the countries with the similar VET practice;

- can be improved by better remuneration of project experts, as experts daily rates ceilings set by the programme are not competitive. These ceilings reflect low incomes of employees in the public sector, without taking into account their alternative incomes within the private sector and in the European market. This discriminatory practice (in comparison to better paying EU countries and in comparison to the real income of experts) makes LLLP projects less attractive, compared to other performance based activities.

All three aforementioned proposals are, however, far from being implemented. Even more, a project life is currently strongly limited by project funding, and even dedicated project websites, the most powerful dissemination tool, usually vanish after consuming project funds. As a consequence, projects are at risk of failing to achieve their most important function - to induce changes within the widest possible scope.

Examples of initiatives

As already mentioned above, there are no LLLP projects with a significant impact on the VET system. Therefore, we do not propose an example of initiative based on the LLLP project. Nevertheless, there are projects with a positive reputation. Two mobility projects were already mentioned in chapter 3.2.

The project SK/02/B/F/PP-142272 Instructor for Driving, www.ifd.szm.com, coordinated by the Association of Driving Schools in the Slovak Republic, was among 10 Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects awarded the Quality Award during the event accompanying the conference on the follow-up to the Copenhagen process, held in Helsinki on 4th-5th December 2006.

The following three projects were selected by the LLLP National Agency as positive examples to cover three specific targets.

- SK/06/B/F/PP-177436 “The European Virtual Laboratory of Mathematics”, conducted by the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, aimed at provision of a free database of electronic instructional materials in mathematics;
- SK/04/B/F/PP-177401 “Better Counselling and Communication Skills for Labour Office Advisers and Job Mediators”, conducted by the Labour Office in Dunajská Streda, aimed at improvement of guidance and communication skills of counsellors and job mediators;
- SK/05/B/F/PP-177423 “Competencies Development through Self-Learning in Services SME”, conducted by the Regional Development Agency in Senec, aimed at training of facilitators of self-learning within SME in the service sector.

8.3 Use of other EU funds

Pre-accession instruments

After the initial strategic programme valid for the whole Czechoslovakia “Labour Market Restructuralisation” (1991 – ECU 6.5 million), additional VET programmes “Renewal of the Education System” (1992 – ECU 4.5 million), “Human Resources Development Fund” (1993 – ECU 3 million); “VET Reform” (1994 – ECU 4 million) were launched in Slovakia. Since

1998, programmes focusing on improvement of education for Roma were embedded within six PHARE projects with the indirect impact on VET potential of this minority:

- 1998 “Improving the Situation of Roma in the Spiš Region” (EUR 0.45 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.1 million);
- 1999 “Minority Tolerance Programme” (EUR 1.8 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.5 million);
- 2000 “Improvement of the Situation of Roma in the Slovak Republic” (EUR 3.8 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.309 million);
- 2001 “Support to the Roma Minority in the Education Field” (EUR 1.7 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.675 million);
- 2002 “Further Integration of Roma Children in the Education Field and Improving Their Living Conditions” (EUR 1 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.050 million) with the specific activity Re-integration of Roma Children from Socially Disadvantaged Environment from Special Schools into Regular Primary Schools with the budget EUR 0.350 million;
- 2003 “Support for Further Integration of Roma in the Education Field” (EUR 1 million with national cofinancing EUR 0.110 million).

There were no PHARE projects with a direct impact on VET since the 1994 PHARE project mentioned above. Nevertheless, three crucial results of this project were gradually weakened in their impact.

- Since 1996, when the government resolution “to prepare occupational standards with consequently pursued educational standards” has been adopted, about 470 occupations out of about 3 000 occupations registered on the labour market (ISCO-88) were analysed, in accordance with the procedures and methods for processing occupational standards, adopted by the Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (RILSAF). However, even RILSAF experts preferred to call the obtained outputs “occupational characteristics” rather than “occupational standards”. Over 300 occupational characteristics related to VET schools were submitted to the State Institute of Vocational Education for further processing of related educational standards. The government intended to finish this work by the end of 1998, but this was unrealistic, and even more, the respective decision was cancelled and occupational standards not elaborated after closing the project. The group was dissolved and the experience gained has just very little influence on working on the National System of Occupations;
- Modularisation of IVET started successfully within this project with the involvement of 20 pilot schools. People were retrained and ninety-five new curricula already prepared subjected to testing. Modularisation of curricula was in progress in particular in Machinery, Electrotechnics and Construction. As the modularised curriculum has been understood just as an alternative to the traditional curriculum and not as a single possible pattern, it is up to schools, and in particular right now after 2008 decentralisation reform, to what extent VET schools will capitalise on this experience. Not surprisingly, only two projects (from the construction and chemistry sectors) aimed at ECVET are with Slovak participation within the Leonardo da Vinci programme;
- Higher professional schools providing for ISCED 5B tertiary education were finally not established as independent institutions and respective programmes (despite rating ISCED 5B) are offered by secondary schools, legislatively covered by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. and disregarded by the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. Nevertheless, the experience contributed to ongoing segmentation of higher education schools and some former universities are expected to become vocational higher education institutions, at least partly covering the role of higher professional schools.

Structural funds and the Cohesion Fund

The following table offers an overview of allocation of means for all funds corresponding to the National Strategic Reference Framework for the Period 2007-2013.

Table 8.8: Allocation of means for all funds, according to NSRF 2007-2013 (without cofinancing from the state budget)

All NSRR 2007–2013 funds total	11 360 619 950
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) total	5 962 278 231
Cohesion Fund (CF) total	3 898 738 563
European Social Fund (ESF) total	1 499 603 156
ESF Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion	881 801 578
ESF Operational Programme Education	617 801 578
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	1 969 418 078
European Fisheries Fund (EFF)	13 688 528

Source: National Strategic Reference Framework for the Period 2007-2013

Within the 2007-2013 programming period, in total EUR 5 962 278 from the ERDF have been allocated to cofinance 9 operational programmes. The most relevant to the development of VET are the Operational Programme Research and Development and the Operational Programme Informatisation of Society.

The total budget of the Operational Programme Research and Development, managed by the Ministry of Education, is EUR 1 422 841 617, of which EUR 1 209 415 373 is from the ERDF and EUR 213 426 244 from the state budget.

The total budget of the Operational Programme Informatisation of Society, managed by the Office of the Slovak Government, is EUR 1 168 347 536, of which EUR 993 095 405 is from the ERDF and EUR 175 252 131 from the state budget.

All regions except the Bratislava Region are eligible for the Regional Operational Programme (ROP), managed by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development. The total budget is EUR 1 705 561 637, of which EUR 1 445 000 000 is directly from the ERDF. Priority Axis 1 “Infrastructure of Education” can influence the quality of schools (including VET schools) by improving the equipment and facilities, as visible from the goal: Increasing the level of provided services in the field of education ”performed through the following groups of activities:

- reconstruction, expanding and modernisation of selected preschool facilities, elementary and secondary schools
- procurement of equipment, including ICT equipment for the selected preschool facilities, elementary and secondary schools in connection to their reconstruction, expanding and modernisation.”

The total sum allocated for this priority is EUR 410 454 545, of which EUR 348 500 000 is from the ERDF.

A similar measure (3.1.1 Building and development of school infrastructure) existed within the 2004-2006 Operational Programme Basic Infrastructure, with the total allocation of EUR 422 363 451 for this Operational Programme from the ERDF (corresponding to the aforementioned EUR 1 445 000 000 from the ERDF in 2007-2013). Schools from the

Bratislava Region can benefit from the Operational Programme Bratislava Region. Measure 1.1 “Regeneration of Settlements” comprises three groups of activities, of which the third one focuses on renovation of schools and education institutions, playgrounds, and social and community institutions. The total sum allocated for the Operational Programme Bratislava Region is EUR 102 352 942, of which EUR 87 000 000 from the ERDF. The amount allocated for Measure 1.1 is EUR 32 038 282, of which EUR 27 232 540 from the ERDF.

These programmes are expected to reduce the modernisation debt caused by a long period of underfinancing education, during which VET schools were the most affected by fiscal austerity.

The most relevant for VET systemic changes and for the content related changes in provision of VET is the European Social Fund, and therefore, we will discuss it in more detail.

2004-2006 ESF programming period

Labour sector

Within the 2004-2006 ESF programming period, VET was addressed within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, managed by Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Family. The following table indicates priorities and measures of this programme.

Table 8.9: Overview of priorities and measures of Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources

Priority 1: Development of active labour market policy
Measure 1.1: Modernization, extension and improvement of employment services and development of activation programmes for job seekers
Measure 1.2: Facilitation of the integration and reintegration into the labour market of the job seekers with special emphasis on the disadvantaged job seekers through support of job creation and self employment
Measure 1.3: Development of training and retraining of job seekers and job changers in order to improve their prospects on the labour market
Priority 2: Reinforcement of social inclusion and equal opportunities on the labour market
Measure 2.1: Improvement of the employability of groups at risk of social exclusion
Measure 2.2: Elimination of barriers, which prevent equality of men and women on the labour market with emphasis on the reconciliation of work and family life
Priority 3: Increasing the qualification and adaptability of employees and persons entering the labour market
Measure 3.1: Adaptation of the vocational training and education to the needs of the knowledge-based society
Measure 3.2: Increasing the scope, improvement and broader provision of further education with a view to improving the qualification and adaptability of employees.
Measure 3.3: Development of career guidance and of systems for anticipating changes of qualification needs on the labour market

Source: Programme Complement of the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources

The table below offers data drawn for respective priorities and measures presented in the table above.

Table 8.10: Drawing funds in SOP Human Resources, 2004-2006 programming period, as of 31st December 2009 (ESF and state budget, in EUR)

P/M	Means allocated for 2004-2006			Means drawn			Drawing (%)	
	Total	ESF	State budget	ESF	State budget	Total	ESF	State budget
P 1	237 118 675	185 436 044	51 682 631	194 858 216	54 425 418.95	249 283 634.95	105.08	105.31
M 1.1	102 292 236	81 833 789	20 458 447	85 571 254	21 392 821.28	106 964 075.28	104.57	104.57
M 1.2	85 177 920	63 883 440	21 294 480	68 530 838	22 843 566.67	91 374 404.67	107.27	107.27
M 1.3	49 648 519	39 718 815	9 929 704	40 756 124	10 189 031.00	50 945 155.00	102.61	102.61
P 2	24 624 867	19 324 084	5 300 783	20 272 307	5 256 911.67	25 529 218.67	104.91	99.17
M 2.1	17 108 684	13 686 947	3 421 737	15 381 866	3 662 079.82	19 043 945.82	112.38	107.02
M 2.2	7 516 183	5 637 137	1 879 046	4 890 441	1 594 831.85	6 485 272.85	86.75	84.87
P 3	94 081 280	71 186 367	22 894 913	50 196 875	15 409 224.55	65 606 099.55	70.51	67.30
M 3.1	27 339 949	20 504 962	6 834 987	14 848 969	4 433 604.05	19 282 573.05	72.42	64.87
M 3.2	54 233 192	40 674 894	13 558 298	30 458 349	9 753 189.20	40 211 538.20	74.88	71.94
M 3.3	12 508 139	10 006 511	2 501 628	4 889 557	1 222 431.30	6 111 988.30	48.86	48.87
TS	11 379 237	8 534 428	2 844 809	8 347 855	2 782 618.46	11 130 473.46	97.81	97.81
Total	367 204 059	284 480 923	82 723 136	273 675 253	77 874 173.62	351 549 426.62	96.20	94.14

Source: Final Report on Implementation of SOP Human Resources, Annexes, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for SOP Human Resources

Notes: P – Priority, M – Measure, TS – Technical support

The Bratislava Region is not eligible for drawing from the ESF with the same intensity as other Slovak regions lagging behind in the development. The following table indicates priorities and measures of the programme addressing Bratislava Region priorities and measures.

Table 8.11: Overview of priorities and measures of Single Programming Document NUTS II – Bratislava Objective 3

Priority 1: The development of the active labour market policy and the social integration
Measure 1.1: Increasing employability of the disadvantaged groups in the labour market and the groups at risk of social exclusion
Measure 1.2: Improving service deliveries by the employment services
Priority 2: The development of lifelong learning and the support for research and development in the context of human resources quality improvement
Measure 2.1: Stimulating and improving the provision of education relevant to employers and businesses
Measure 2.2: Improving the quality of employment and competitiveness of the Bratislava Region by human resource development in the area of research and development

Source: Programme Complement of the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective

The table below offers data drawn for respective priorities and measures presented in the table above.

Table 8.12: Drawing funds in SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, 2004-2006 programming period, as of 31st December 2009 (ESF and state budget, in EUR)

Priority / Measure	Allocated means for 2004-2006 (ESF + state budget)	Paid (ESF + state budget)	Drawing (%)
Priority 1	19 491 637.00	20 177 799.94	103.52
Measure 1.1	17 700 352.00	18 026 453.31	101.84
Measure 1.2	1 791 285.00	2 151 346.63	120.10
Priority 2	50 370 221.00	54 126 631.46	107.46
Measure 2.1	41 972 549.00	46 422 381.79	110.60
Measure 2.2	8 397 672.00	7 704 249.67	91.74
Technical support	3 144 652.00	3 361 634.28	106.90
Total	73 006 510.00	77 666 065.68	106.38

Source: Final Report on Implementation of SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3

Respective activities were implemented within the so-called

- national projects that had to have significant systemic impact and/or were entitled to implement national policies backed by law and were conducted by an institution directly selected by the respective ministry;
- demand driven projects responding to specific calls complementing large national projects, with activities conducted by subjects from the “field”, with specific expertise and focus (particular regions and/or target groups).

Here are the VET (and disadvantaged groups addressing) most relevant national projects conducted by institutions from the labour sector.

Table 8.13: List of VET related projects under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family as managing authority

National project/Managing institution	SOP (valid except Bratislava Region)			SPD (valid for Bratislava Region)		
	M*	Duration	Budget (EUR)	M*	Duration	Budget (EUR)
NP I Support for Employing the Unemployed with an Emphasis on Disadvantaged Groups in the Labour Market/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.2	1.2.2004 – 31.8.2008	61 777 612.89	1.1	1.2.2004 – 31.12.2008	3 808 834.63
NP III Education and Training of the Unemployed for the Labour Market/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.3	1.2.2004 – 30.4.2006	16 974 000.00	1.1	1.2.2004 – 30.4.2006	2 238 597.88
NP IIIA Education and Training for the Labour Market and Employee Practice/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.3	15.3.2006 – 30.6.2009	1 285 637.68	1.1	15.3.2006 – 30.6.2009	1 956 589.66
NP V Activation of the Unemployed and the Unemployed	1.1	9.2.2004 – 31.12.2008	87 239 393.00	1.1	9.2.2004 – 31.12.2008	778 135.49

with Low Motivation Dependent on the Social Assistance Benefit/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family						
NP IX Graduate Practice Centre of Labour, Social Affairs/ and Family	1.3	1.7.2004 – 30.6.2009	17 528 891.42	1.1	1.7.2004 – 30.6.2009	681 819.00
NP VII Increasing the Scope and Quality of Employment Services through Career Information and Guidance and Counselling Instruments and Services/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.1	1.7.2004 – 30.6.2005	3 684 210.53	1.2	1.7.2004 – 30.6.2005	414 473.68
NP VIIA Modernisation of Employment Services through Supporting the Development of Instruments and Forms of Career Information and Guidance Services/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.1	1.8.2005 – 31.12.2008	2 832 634.08	1.2	1.8.2005 – 31.12.2008	924 789.72
NP VIIB Increasing Effectiveness, Modernising and Increasing the Scope of Counselling Services/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	1.1	1.12.2005 – 30.6.2008	6 315 789.47	1.2	1.12.2005 – 30.6.2008	476 333.00
NP XI Theoretical and Practical Training of Employees for Acquiring New Knowledge and Professional Skills/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	3.2	1.3.2006 – 30.6.2009	20 734 686.97	2.1	1.3.2006 – 30.6.2009	3 906 924.25
NP XX Training for Public Administration Staff Focused on Digital Literacy and Preparation for ECDL Certification through E-learning/ Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, coordination later transferred to the Ministry of Finance	-	-	-	2.1	10.7.2006 – 30.9.2008	5 627 316.90, of which Ministry of Finance: 3 199 613.72
NP – Excellent University – Increasing the Employees' Competitiveness in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region for Building the Knowledge-Based Society and Developing the Region/ Comenius University in Bratislava	-	-	-	2.1	1.8.2007 – 31.10.2008	2 795 276.84
NP- Increasing the Competitiveness and Employability in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region/ Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry	-	-	-	2.1	1.8.2007 – 30.6.2008	674 035.82

Source: Final Report on Implementation of SOP Human Resources, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for SOP Human Resources; Final Report on Implementation of SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 38 for SOP, EUR = SKK 30.126 for SPD

* M - Measure

Education sector

Within the 2004-2006 ESF programming period VET was addressed within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with the Ministry of Education as an intermediary body. Here are the VET most relevant national projects conducted by institutions from the education sector.

Table 8.14: List of VET related national projects from the education sector

National project/ Managing institution	SOP (valid except Bratislava Region)			SPD (valid for Bratislava Region)		
	M*	Duration	Budget (EUR)	M	Duration	Budget (EUR)
Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the Labour Market/ Academia Istropolitana	3.2	1.12.2004 – 31.10.2008	1 866 768	2.1	1.12.2004 – 31.10.2008	227 897
Curricular Transformation of Teaching the General Education Part of the Secondary School Education in the Process of Preparing Young People for the Needs of the Labour Market/ National Institute for Education	3.1	1.12.2004 – 30.6.2008	503 767	2.1	1.12.2004 – 30.6.2008	108 411
Improving the Level of Measuring and Monitoring the Quality of Education in the Process of the Preparing Young People for the Needs of the Labour Market/ National Institute for Education	3.1	1.12.2004 – 30.6.2008	861 697	2.1	1.12.2004 – 30.6.2008	284 116
Improving the Effectiveness of Teaching Foreign Languages in Connection with Slovakia's Accession to the European Union/ National Institute for Education	3.1	1.12.2004 – 31.7.2008	357 592	2.1	1.12.2004 – 31.7.2008	91 274
National Project on In-Service Training of VET Teachers Regarding Completing the Study in Secondary Schools/ State Institute of Vocational Education	3.2	1.3.2006 – 31.12.2008	2 190 917	2.1	1.3.2006 – 31.12.2008	416 690
In-Service Training of General Subject Teachers Regarding Completing the Study in Secondary Schools/ National Institute for Education	3.2	1.3.2006 – 31.12.2008	2 472 429	2.1	1.3.2006 – 31.12.2008	290 901
Opening Doors for Teachers to Language Learning/ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre	3.2	5.1.2007 – 30.11.2008	1 411 768	2.1	5.1.2007 – 30.11.2008	457 726

Banská Bystrica						
First-Rate Schooling – Successful Living (note: focused on entrepreneurial education)/ Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia	3.1	5.1.2007 – 31.10.2008	118 269.7 0	2.1	5.1.2007 – 31.10.2008	442 123
Increasing the Qualification Potential of Members of the Roma Community by Introducing a New Study Field “Roma Studies” in the Secondary School Education System/ National Institute for Education	3.1	1.3.2005 – 31.3.2007	250 510.0 0	-	-	-
Provision of Secondary School Scholarships for Secondary School Students whose Parents are Dependent on Welfare Benefits/ Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education	3.1	1.6.2004 – 30.6.2006	3 557 309. 0	-	-	-
Developing New Education Programme in Vocational Training for the Needs of Automotive Industry/ State Institute of Vocational Education	3.1	1.8.2007 – 30.11.2008	1 052 628. 90	-	-	-
Training for People Interested in Working in Public Administration/ Academia Istropolitana	3.2	1.4.2007 – 31.10.2008	1 461 716. 88	2.1	1.4.2007 – 30.11.2008	1 184 210. 53

Source: Final Report on Implementation of SOP Human Resources, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for SOP Human Resources; Final Report on Implementation of SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 38, the last project EUR 1 = SKK 37.51 for SOP, * M - Measure

2007-2013 ESF programming period

Labour sector

Within this programming period, VET is addressed within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion managed by Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Family. The following table indicates priorities and measures of this programme.

Table 8.15: Overview of priorities and measures of Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion

Priority Axis 1: Supporting employment growth
Measure 1.1: Promoting programmes in the area of supporting employment and solving unemployment and long-term unemployment
Measure 1.2: Promoting the creation and sustainability of jobs through increasing the adaptability of workers, businesses and the promotion of entrepreneurship
Priority Axis 2: Supporting social inclusion
Measure 2.1: Supporting the social inclusion of persons at risk of social exclusion or the socially excluded through the development of care services with special regard to marginalized Roma communities

Measure 2.2: Promoting equal opportunities in access to the labour market and supporting the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market with special regard to marginalized Roma communities
Measure 2.3: Promoting the reconciliation of work and family life and care of small children
Priority Axis 3: Supporting employment, social inclusion, and capacity building in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region
Measure 3.1: Promoting employment growth and improving employability, with special regard to knowledge-based society
Measure 3.2: Promoting social inclusion, gender equality, and the reconciliation of work and family life in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region
Measure 3.3: Capacity building and quality improvement of public administration in the BSR
Measure 3.4: Technical support for the Bratislava Self-Governing Region
Priority Axis 4: Building capacities and improving the quality of the public administration
Measure 4.1: Improving the quality of services delivered by public administration and non-governmental organisations
Measure 4.2: Introducing quality management systems in public administration and for NGOs in the area of employment policy and social policy
Priority Axis 5: Technical support

Source: Programming Manual for Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, version 1.1

The table below offers data on funding respective priorities and measures presented in the table above.

Table 8.16: ESF and state budget means allocated for Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion (in EUR)

Priority/Measure	Means allocated for 2007-2013		
	Total	ESF	State budget
Priority Axis 1	667 555 530	567 422 200	100 133 330
Measure 1.1	467 288 871	397 195 540	70 093 331
Measure 1.2	200 266 659	170 226 660	30 039 999
Priority Axis 2	220 941 177	187 800 000	33 141 177
Measure 2.1	84 083 531	71 471 001	12 612 530
Measure 2.2	67 910 588	57 724 000	10 186 588
Measure 2.3	68 947 059	58 605 000	10 342 059
Priority Axis 3	20 943 033	17 801 578	3 141 455
Measure 3.1	8 052 656	6 844 758	1 207 898
Measure 3.2	8 031 593	6 826 854	1 204 739
Measure 3.3	4 021 063	3 417 903	603 160
Measure 3.4	837 721	712 063	125 658
Priority Axis 4	96 158 353	81 734 600	14 423 753
Measure 4.1	86 542 518	73 561 140	12 981 378
Measure 4.2	9 615 835	8 173 460	1 442 375
Technical support	31 815 530	27 043 200	4 772 330
Total	1 037 413 623	881 801 578	155 612 045

Source: Programming Manual for Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, version 1.1

Similarly to the previous programming period, national projects were elaborated to support active labour market policies and to support some systemic changes. There were 36 national projects elaborated with regard to objective Convergence (valid for all regions except the Bratislava Region) and 22 national projects with regard to objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment (valid for the Bratislava Region). In the following table, some of them were selected with a direct impact on VET.

Table 8.17: Total budgets (ESF and state budget means) allocated to VET relevant National projects of Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion

National project/ Managing institution	Duration	Valid except Bratislava Region (EUR)	Valid for Bratislava Region (EUR)
NP VIII-2 National System of Occupations in Slovak Republic/ Education Centre of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	2009 – 2012	11 352 320.00	819 890.00
NP XIV-2 System for Surveying Emerging and Vanishing Working Positions and Forecasting Labour Market Needs/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	2009 – 2012	3 005 745.88	230 509.16
NP III-2/A Education and Training for the Labour Market/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	2009 – 2012	16 942 960.00	-
NP XII-2 Human Resource Development and Systemic Deepening of Workers' Qualification/ Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	2009 – 2012	8 208 962.06	415 907.63
NP XXI-2 Indicators and System for Assessment of the Efficiency of Active Labour Market Policy Measures/ Education Centre of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	2009 – 2010	346 034.16	59 956.71
Education as the Tool of Modern and Pro-Client Oriented State Statistics/ Statistical Office	2010 – 2013	786 301.00	94 293.96

Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Managing Authority for OP Employment and Social Inclusion

Two projects with the expected systemic impact are urgently needed: National Project VIII-2 aimed at the development of the National System of Occupations, and the national project aimed at forecasting labour market needs. National Project XXI-2 is expected to improve assessment of active labour market policies and its results are crucial for monitoring the impact of policies and suggestions for corrections as well as respective amendments of the Act on Employment Services. This is also very relevant for CVET and labour market training organised by labour offices, as the efficiency of this training, cofinanced by the ESF within the earlier programming period, has been disputed (see also part on funding labour market training for unemployed people in chapter 8.1).

National Project III-2/A focusing on labour market training can also benefit from preliminary results of this project. It is important to reduce the deadweight in provision of this training and to improve focusing on appropriately identified skills and targeting on relevant groups.

Education sector

Within the 2007-2013 ESF programming period VET, is addressed within the Operational Programme Education managed by the Ministry of Education. The following table indicates priorities and measures of this programme.

Table 8.18: Overview of priorities and measures of Operational Programme Education

Priority Axis 1: Reform of the education and vocational training system
Measure 1.1: Transformation of traditional school into a modern one
Measure 1.2: Higher education institutions and research & development as the driving forces in the development of a knowledge-based society
Priority Axis 2: Continuing education as an instrument of human resource development
Measure 2.1: Support of continuing education
Measure 2.2: Support of continuing education in the health sector
Priority Axis 3: Support to education of persons with special educational needs
Measure 3.1: Raising the educational level of members of the marginalised Roma communities
Measure 3.2: Raising the educational level of persons with special educational needs
Priority Axis 4: Modern education for a knowledge-based society for the Bratislava Region
Measure 4.1: Transformation of traditional school into a modern one for the Bratislava Region
Measure 4.2: Raising competitiveness of the Bratislava Region through the development of higher and continuing education
Measure 4.3: Technical assistance for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective valid for the Bratislava Region)
Priority Axis 5: Technical assistance for the Convergence Objective (valid except the Bratislava Region)

Source: Programming Manual for Operational Programme Education

The table below offers data on funding respective priorities and measures presented in table above.

Table 8.19: ESF and state budget means allocated for Operational Programme Education (in EUR)

Priority/Measure	Means allocated for 2007-2013		
	Total	ESF	State budget
Priority Axis 1	429 411 765	365 000 000	64 411 765
Measure 1.1	300 000 000	255 000 000	45 000 000
Measure 1.2	129 411 765	110 000 000	19 411 765
Priority Axis 2	171 764 706	146 000 000	25 764 706
Measure 2.1	128 823 529	109 500 000	19 323 529
Measure 2.2	42 941 177	36 500 000	6 441 177
Priority Axis 3	76 470 589	65 000 000	11 470 589
Measure 3.1	57 294 118	48 700 000	8 594 118
Measure 3.2	19 176 471	16 300 000	2 876 471
Priority Axis 4	20 943 034	17 801 578	3 141 456

Measure 4.1	8 131 193	6 911 514	1 219 679
Measure 4.2	11 974 119	10 178 001	1 796 118
Measure 4.3	837 722	712 063	125 659
Technical assistance	28 235 295	24 000 000	4 235 295
Total	726 825 389	617 801 578	109 023 811

Source: Programming Manual for Operational Programme Education, December 2007

National projects (see explanation above)

Until the end of 2009, nine national projects were approved with the total sum allocated EUR 155 554 856.7. Here are six VET most relevant projects (2 additional projects focused on education at basic schools and 1 project focused on kindergartens) listed in the table below indicating allocated means within the Convergence Objective (for all regions except the Bratislava Region and Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (for the Bratislava Region only).

Table 8.20: Total budgets (ESF and state budget means) allocated to VET relevant national projects of Operational Programme Education

National project/ Managing institution	Duration	M*	Valid except Bratislava Region (EUR)	M*	Valid for Bratislava Region (EUR)
In-Service Training of Basic and Secondary School Teachers in Informatics/ National Institute for Education	10/2008 – 9/2011	2.1	7 029 006.34	4.2	1 053 171.81
Modernisation of Educational Process at Secondary Schools/ Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education	12/2008 – 11/2013	1.1	12 733 347.87	4.1	458 401.78
Teacher Training with Regard to Developing School Educational Programmes/ State Institute of Vocational Education	1/2009 – 8/2012	1.1	5 371 901.35	4.1	172 582.48
Developing New Education Programme in Vocational Training for the Needs of Automotive Industry II/ State Institute of Vocational Education	4/2009 – 8/2013	1.1	10 614 788.02	4.1	331 867.66
External Evaluation of School Quality Supporting Self-Evaluation Processes and School Development/ State School Inspection	10/2009 – 9/2013	1.1	800 284.40	4.1	124 268.60
Professional and Carrier Development of Pedagogical Staff/ Methodological-Pedagogical Centre	10/2009 – 10/2013	2.1	43 193 286.00	4.2	5 491 430.00

Source: Ministry of Education, Managing Authority for national projects within OP Education

Note: * M - Measure

The following national projects are under preparation:

- Assessment of the Quality of Education at Basic and Secondary Schools, in the Context of Ongoing Educational Content Reform;
- Digitalisation of the Content of State Educational Programmes for Basic and Secondary Schools;

- National System of Qualifications in the Context of Continuing Education Supported by Guidance and Counselling System.

Demand driven projects (see explanation above)

Since March 2008 till October 2009, the Agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the Structural Funds of the European Union has published 15 calls for submission of demand driven projects, out of which 2 were focused on continuing education (Measures 2.1, 4.2), 2 on higher education (Measures 1.2, 4.2), 4 on secondary schools (Measures 1.1, 4.1), 4 on basic schools (Measures 1.1, 4.1), 1 for secondary VET schools (Measure 1.1), 1 for students with special educational needs (Measure 3.2), 1 for education of Roma at basic schools (Measure 3.1). In total EUR 134 956 847.9 was allocated to support the approved projects.

Here are the most relevant calls (i.e. without those focused on basic schools).

Call	M*	Valid except Bratislava Region	Valid for Bratislava Region
Development and increasing the efficiency of school educational programmes at secondary VET schools	1.1	20 000 000	
Support for continuing education in selected sectors	4.2		500 000
Support for continuing education in selected sectors	2.1	7 500 000	
Support for innovative forms of education at higher education institutions a human recourse development in R&D	1.2	35 000 000	
Support for innovative forms of education at higher education institutions a human recourse development in R&D	4.2		1 000 000
Increasing the education level of people with special educational needs	3.2	8 000 000	
Increasing the education level of members of marginalized Roma communities	3.1	13 000 000	
Development and implementation of school educational programmes of secondary schools	1.1	9 958 175.66	
Development and implementation of school educational programmes of secondary schools	4.1		663 878.38
Development and implementation of development programmes of secondary schools to support quality increase in compliance with the education system reform	1.1	9 958 175.66	
Development and implementation of development programmes of secondary schools to support quality increase in compliance with the education system reform	4.1		1 161 787.16

Source: Agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the Structural Funds of the European Union

Note: * M - Measure

In addition, there were calls published by the Ministry of Health, Intermediary Body under the Ministry of Education, the Managing Authority, responsible for managing activities within Measure 2.2 focused on continuing education in the health sector.

As visible from the detailed breakdowns above, the new programming period brings substantially more means for relevant operational programmes. The separate Operational Programme Education, managed by the Ministry of Education, offers a lot of means for activities directly aligned to reforms introduced by the new legislation, in particular

- curriculum development training aligned to curricular reform introduced by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. and aimed at the development of school educational programmes;
- professional and carrier development of pedagogical Staff corresponding to Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff.

As also clearly visible from the list of national projects, two weak points are addressed – ICT support for education and quality evaluation. With regard to labour market training, the ESF will concentrate on unemployed training (according to § 46 of Employment Services Act No. 5/2004 Coll., while two other VET relevant instruments stipulated by this act, employee training (§ 47) and graduate practice (§ 51) will not be cofinanced by the ESF anymore via national projects similar to the earlier national projects (see the table above with the list of national project managed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the 2004-2006 programming period). On the other hand, there are diverse national projects aimed at training of specifically targeted employees (in particular from state administration and public sector authorities).

The automotive industry is a clear winner from respective VET areas' points of view, as visible from two national projects within both ESF programming periods aimed at the curricular reform of secondary VET programmes preparing workers for the automotive industry. This indicates that the crucial position of the automotive industry in the national economy is further backed by the ESF programming. Nevertheless, both

- making national economy less depending on the assembling industry; and
- improving VET focusing on future knowledge-based economy needs;

should also be rethought within the ESF programming.

Strengths and weaknesses

ESF is the most important regarding the amount of means, as well as with regard to the impact of all EU programmes, as also visible from the text above, and from the pluses and minuses of other instruments (PHARE) already discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Therefore, we will concentrate here on the ESF only. Besides the ESF, also the LLLP and former Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates Programmes have a crucial influence on VET. Within these programmes VET schools benefited predominantly from Comenius and Lingua E Sub-programmes (see chapter 8.2 for details).

Strengths

The 2004-2006 programming period offered a unique opportunity to start new activities to support pending VET reforms. A long period of underfinancing education and research on education and training led to the diminishing activities successfully initiated by the PHARE VET Reform Programme, and to insufficient reflection of European initiatives. Funding from the ESF supported the reforms already in progress or in the pipeline, providing for the means

and room for both more sophisticated policy making and involvement of practitioners from schools and other stakeholders.

In IVET, the ESF contributed to the school leaving exams reform (see the example of initiative on a new model of ISCED 3A “maturita” school leaving examination in chapter 6.1), to the renewal of curricula in IVET ISCED 3C study fields (see more information on the project in chapter 4.2), and it allowed all active schools and individuals to catch up on improvement of learning environment, in particular using ICT in education. Emerging of new, dedicated portals in support of storing and disseminating the relevant information for teachers, students and parents indicated a break in this field after a long period of lagging behind. Furthermore, there were also activities addressing future challenges launched. Here, the project of the Bratislava Region, providing for the experience and background for legislation introducing the creation of centres of VET, or the project of the Banská Bystrica Region, bringing closer all regional stakeholders within the learning region project, are positive examples. A much more clear focus on quality assurance in contrast to the previous programming period visible in programming documents as well as from the already starting national project on schools self-evaluation and external quality evaluation must be seen positively.

In CVET/LLL, a huge national project was launched to capitalise on the consultation process on the Memorandum on LLL and to initiate a new policy compatible with European mainstream initiatives and the development of new legislation. With regard to labour market training, the ESF became not just a source of complementary funding, but in fact, it was the main driver allowing for the variability in active labour market policies and their funding.

Weaknesses

Four negative features must be highlighted:

- insufficient focus on aligning the ESF initiatives with European initiatives;
- insufficient sustainability of projects;
- administrative load as a consequence of unpreparedness of both sides, in particular, however, of national authorities;
- disadvantage of the Bratislava Region in comparison to other seven regions.

The ESF programming under the Ministry of Education, as indicated above, concentrated on urgent national challenges endangered by a long-term lack of means from the state budget, it failed, however, to see IVET policies embedded within the crucial European initiatives in particular the Copenhagen process. Some Copenhagen instruments have hardly been touched. There were no specific projects aimed at implementation of some crucial tools, in particular CQAF, EQF and recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, or no significant impact can be seen with regard to them. One of the largest failures was caused by the inability of managing authorities to translate into practice planned initiatives aimed at anticipation of labour market needs and skill needs required by employers (see explanation about Measure 3.3.B of the Operational Programme Human Resource and about the project of Academia Istropolitana creating of system of LLL (for both see the part on strengths and weaknesses in identifying and anticipating skill needs in chapter 4.1). Within the new programming period, Copenhagen tools are still insufficiently addressed. In fact, only one project is envisaged directly aligned to the Copenhagen process. It is the project of Academia Istropolitana focused on the development of the National System of Qualifications, however,

still pending and vulnerable by its complexity. Unfortunately, no smaller projects directly corresponding to selected Copenhagen tools are envisaged.

Many projects stopped activities after the closing of the projects, as visible clearly from project websites not updated later or even removed due to the lack of support from national sources. Many interested pieces of information are not publicly accessible anymore. National authorities failed to evaluate results achieved and to decide about good practices worth of further support. Monitoring activities and good practice identification did not result in clear decisions about inevitability to keep prioritised good practice activities alive. Thus, as often earlier, the life of promising initiatives rests on the continuing personal commitment of practitioners rather than on systemic support from authorities.

National authorities underestimated administration of ESF programme, and as a consequence, the pressure for accountability was replaced by the bureaucratic process with permanently changing requirements and procedures that finally led to discouraging many project managers not willing to apply for ESF projects in the future. This can weaken the quality of demand driven projects in the new programming period. Although administrative capacities in both relevant sectors of labour and education were strengthened, e.g. by establishment of the large Agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the Structural Funds of the European Union, current administrative procedures are still negatively perceived by project managers criticising inexperience of the staff with the ESF project practice and the administrative burden resulting from bureaucratic methods of the management.

In April 2010, Slovakia was the third worst in EU in drawing EU Structural Funds, according to the European Commission. According to the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, which is directly related to VET, is the best out of 10 operational programmes in drawing EU funds (approximately 11 % of EUR 882 million drawn), not taking into account the Operational Programme Technical Support with 17 % means drawn. In contrast, two operational programmes directly important for VET were the slowest in using EU funds. Less than 3 % of EUR 618 million has been drawn within the Operational Programme Education, which is directly and fundamentally related to VET, and less than 3 % of EUR 993 million has also been drawn within the Operational Programme Informatisation of Society, which is indirectly, however, significantly related to VET.

As the Bratislava Region with GDP per capita over 75% of the EU average is not eligible for drawing funds within the Convergence Objective (and during the earlier programming period within Objective 1), a specific operational programme had to be elaborated with less favourable conditions for funding from EU sources. Bratislava Region “richness” is, however, virtual and caused by the accountancy practice influenced by a disproportionally higher share in location of headquarters in the capital city. Nevertheless, there is no substantial difference between the Bratislava Region education sector and other regions education sector. In contrast to the labour market sector, where the Bratislava Region features extremely low unemployment compared to other regions, in particular in the East and South-East of Slovakia. Thus, secondary VET schools and higher education institutions from the Bratislava Region feel disadvantaged in contrast to peer institutions outside the Bratislava Region.

Examples of initiatives

The most important projects were already discussed within other chapters and there are also examples of initiatives embedded there. Some of important examples of initiatives funded from the ESF were already included in other parts of this report.

For more information on ESF projects see e.g. the example of initiative on creating the system of lifelong learning and guidance in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region in chapter 4.1, the project “Quality of School – a Guarantee of the Regional Schooling Reform” in chapter 6.1, the establishment of centres of VET in the Bratislava Self-Governing Region in chapter 6.2, the project “First-Rate Schooling – Successful Living” in chapter 7.1, and on the initiatives supported by the ESF see the example of initiative on a new model of ISCED 3A “maturita” school leaving examination in chapter 6.1 and professional development of teachers in a career system in chapter 6.5.

8.4 Improving VET governance

Decentralisation reform starting in 2000 and promoting subsidiarity, strengthening power of self-governments and modernisation of public administration (see the example below) initiated changes resulting in a fully new VET governance architecture in 2010. This decade of gradual changes started with the establishment of regional parliaments and heads of eight self-governing regions, elected for the first time in December 2001.

IVET - secondary VET schools

In the late 1990s and in particular in the early 2000s the need to reduce the number of schools, caused by a demographic decline, became very urgent. The adjustment of the school network was annually a subject of hard negotiations, predominantly with regard to the network of study and training branches, which were subject to reductions in order to achieve more effective allocation of funds. The reduction proposal has been periodically suggested by the Intersectoral Committee consisting of representatives of regional offices, sectoral ministries and other relevant bodies, such as public employment services and professional organisations, (e.g. the Slovak Small Craft Association). As a consequence of a conflict among sectors, the Intersectoral Committee’s suggestions did not lead to substantial cost saving measures. Sectoral ministries usually disagreed with proposed changes affecting schools within their scope. Thus, in coincidence with the ongoing overarching decentralisation process, the sectoral ministries role diminished. Only some of them continued to play their role in support of specific secondary VET schools within their professional scope (health, police, fire-fighting). The influence of other sectoral ministries have been substantially reduced after the responsibility to establish and maintain VET schools, originally focusing on preparation of workers for their sectors, has been taken away from them (Ministry of Economy - 129 schools, Ministry of Agriculture - 63 schools, Ministry of Construction - 22 schools, etc.) since 1st July 2001. Regional state authorities have transferred this responsibility to the geographically identical regional self-governing regions one year later.

The responsibility for the establishment of schools was transferred to the self-governing bodies on 1st July 2002. In compliance with Act No. 416/2001 Coll. on Transition of Some Competencies from State Administration to Municipalities and Higher Territorial Units (self-governing regions), self-governing regions got the responsibility for the establishment and

cancelling (in compliance with the network of schools and school establishments) of all originally state managed secondary VET schools and VET establishments aimed at provision of practical training for some VET schools. Some schools, which are of trans-regional importance, e.g. bilingual schools established under international agreements (e.g. Commercial School, Hrobáková str., Bratislava, based on bilateral Slovak-Austrian agreement), or schools for special educational needs pupils (of which some provide for VET), have remained under the responsibility of the state administration. Hence, regional educational authorities are currently of two types:

- the state administration, provided by eight regional school offices maintained by the Ministry of Education and dominantly responsible for transferring public funds to school establishers;
- the self-governing administration, provided by eight offices of self-governing regions responsible for maintaining VET schools and establishments (except the aforementioned schools maintained by regional school offices) located in the same cities as the eight state administration regional school offices.

A new system of self-governing offices and sectoral state administration offices were established on 1st January 2004, and fiscal decentralisation came subsequently into force on 1st January 2005, dominantly based on redistribution of personal income tax (see the part on funding policies development in chapter 8.1).

Within the decentralisation process the Ministry of Education developed to the national authority almost solely responsible for IVET till 2008. Other ministries were only given the opportunity to participate in advisory bodies and working groups subordinated to the Ministry of Education. A typical example were sectoral expert commissions affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education, within which also other than education sector experts had the opportunity to express their opinions concerning curricula and other aspects of IVET provision, e.g. school leaving exams. Their advisory scope has been expanded to all VET secondary schools and fields of study, but their management power was abolished. Regional players in cooperation with the Ministry of Education became responsible for the elaboration and adjustment of the rationalisation strategies concerning the secondary school networks in accordance with the regional development plans. Nevertheless, the rationalisation (primarily aimed at cost saving) came into effect in particular due to the introduction of strict per capita funding (see the example on financing in chapter 8.1).

With coming in force of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, the period of a sort of isolation of VET from other sectors and employers terminated, and even more, the education sector role in VET contracted extremely. In contrast to the period till 2008, people outside the education sector are expected to take a lead in preparing strategy documents or supplying the background data for their development (see the example describing VET councils in chapter 4.3).

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET stipulated the creation of multi-partisan VET councils on national, regional and sectoral levels. Although the Ministry of Education has remained responsible for the development of overall VET strategies, the supply of sub-national strategies to the National VET Council and subsequently to the Ministry of Education dominantly depends on the experience, specific data and points of view of stakeholders representing employers.

Sectoral VET strategies aimed at the analysis of sectoral skills and future training of students for sectoral occupations are to be periodically prepared by respective sectoral ministries

(Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment) assisted by Sectoral VET Councils, where education sector representatives play just an advisory role (providing the expertise concerning the valid educational legislation and curriculum development methodology). Sectoral VET Councils are established by professional associations/chambers in cooperation with the respective sectoral ministry and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Regional self-governments, advised by the Regional VET Council, again with the dominant influence of employers, are responsible for elaboration of regional VET strategies.

With coming in force of the Act on VET, the identification of labour market needs as the basis for regulation of IVET has been for the first time embedded into legislation. “Plans of labour market needs”, to be elaborated by the aforementioned Sectoral VET Councils under the supervision of a specific employers representing the professional bodies identified by law (see the example in chapter 4.3) and indicating the number of graduates needed in respective study/training branches for the following five years, are to be used as the basis for the decisions on networks of VET schools and their study programmes.

All schools were free to renew up to 30 % of the content and relocate up to 10 % of week hours in accordance with the study programme priorities, however, they had to stick to the list of obligatory subjects. Since the 2008 curricular decentralisation introduced by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll., schools are authorised to develop their own curriculum (a school educational programme), sticking to the state requirements embedded within the obligatory framework set by state educational programmes. According to this act, and again set in a firm way for the first time in legislation, directors of VET schools have to discuss their curricula with appropriate representatives of employers.

Employers can intervene more into designing and assessing VET programmes, and developing and validating qualifications and education standards. Furthermore, several acts on chambers were amended by the Act on VET to entitle them to directly cooperate with the Ministry of Education in enhancing the quality of IVET. Thus, in contrast to conditions before 2008, employers are not just expected to participate, but in fact forced by the legislation to participate more deeply at the elaboration of VET graduates profiles and at setting requirements on knowledge, skills, abilities and working habits, as well as at elaboration of school educational programmes.

IVET – higher education institutions

Although regional schools are also legal entities, higher education institutions’ autonomy is much stronger. The Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing legislation, however, there are hardly policies developed purely on the central level, as there are two strong players representing higher education institutions recognised by law: the Slovak Rectors’ Conference and the Higher Education Council. While the former is gradually increasing in importance, as it is composed of executive representatives of universities, the latter is gradually decreasing in importance, as it is a large body composed of elective representatives of all constituents of universities, often unable to offer a clear stance and vision. The Ministry of Education and the government influence universities by a financing scheme and by regulating an inflow of funding for research activities. Furthermore, the classification of former universities into three categories of higher education institutions is in progress, based on the so-called comprehensive accreditation by the Accreditation Commission, an advisory body to the

government. Thus, all higher education institutions are due to deliver autonomously elaborated study programmes for accreditation (sticking to the framework set by the legislation), but they also undergo a comprehensive accreditation procedure focused on assessing their quality every six years. Not meeting respective criteria, they can be stopped in provision of respective (higher) cycles of tertiary education (see chapter 6.3).

CVET

The Ministry of Education is responsible for legislation for CVET, however, there are no clear borders between the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education focusing on “further” education and other governmental institutions engaged in lifelong learning, in particular the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with responsibility set by legislation towards labour market training.

According to Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education, CVET became a legitimate part of the education system of the Slovak Republic. Everybody, regardless of age and educational attainment, was entitled to the right to continue his/her education in accordance with his/her abilities and interests. The act specified the establishment of continuing training institutions, conditions of accreditation, issuance of certificates of completed training, etc. However, there were no mandatory sources for financing continuing training identified. It was listed what sources were eligible for financing training, but this list of sources was just a demarcation of possibilities of financing and no funds were secured, and no incentives for allocation of own means towards companies and individuals set. Thus, the declarative essence of the law provided for only the institutional backing of the establishment of educational institutions and their activities. Nothing substantially important was offered compared to regulation by the free market. Accreditation of CVET programmes offered an option how to become more visible on the market, however, without substantial guarantee of quality, as accreditation was dominantly based on the input assessment and formal administrative procedures.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, opened the window for embedding CVET into lifelong learning and reflection of impulses of Memorandum on LLL (see e.g. the part on validation of non-formal and informal learning in chapter 3.1 or the part on improving support services for groups at risk in chapter 5.2) by future legislation. For a long time pending Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, however, only partly covered impulses from these two papers. Nevertheless, it made a crucial step in support of lifelong learning by setting the National System of Qualifications composed of qualifications and for the first time in the legislation also partial qualifications (see the part on the European Qualification Framework in 3.1 or the part on validation of prior learning in chapter 4.4). The opportunity to get recognised partial qualifications makes CVET a much more powerful instrument for acquiring qualifications, originally available only within formal IVET systems. In contrast to earlier Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education allowing for issuing certificates of attendance, Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, replacing the former act and coming in force since February 2010, opens the door for issuing certificates on partial qualifications and subsequently also (full) qualifications. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the earlier regulation, only programmes aligned to the future National System of Qualifications are envisaged to be eligible for the accreditation by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Continuing Education. Furthermore, the accreditation of educational programmes is now more strictly regulated, in contrast to the regulation set by the earlier Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education. However, it is still only input assessment based. Furthermore, no incentives in support of CVET/LLL were set by this law due to disagreement of employers and financial institutions (the National Bank and the Ministry of Finance). Thus, CVET/LLL market has

remained in fact free, without direct interventions (even concerning provision and quality checking). It will be so until the NSQ is completed. Enterprise training has also remained untouched so far; with large companies following their own training culture and small and medium companies (if not well off and able to pay for external service) suffering from a lack of means and opportunities for formal training.

Training for unemployed

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is responsible for creating labour market policies, their provision and determining priorities, as well as their reshaping for respective coming years. It is responsible for legislation regarding employment and development of tools balancing supply and demand on the labour market. In the 2000s, public employment services were covered by the public legal National Labour Office (NLO). At the national level, the National Labour Office had two self-governing bodies:

- the Board of Directors consisting of five representatives of each social partner elected by the parliament and headed by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family;
- the Supervisory Board with controlling responsibility, consisting of three representatives of each social partner elected by the parliament.

The NLO executive body at the national level was the Directorate General, headed by the Director General. The Directorate General served the two aforementioned self-governing bodies and was also responsible for lower organisational units: eight Regional Labour Offices and 79 District Labour Offices (DLO), headed by directors appointed and recalled by the Director General.

Public employment services were financed via the National Labour Office budget approved by the parliament. The NLO budget consisted of four funds filled in by contributions of employers, employees and self-employed. Collection of contributions was the responsibility of executive bodies of NLO and was separated from the state budget.

Act No. 387/1996 Coll. on Employment stipulated in § 79 seven active labour market tools, of which retraining was the single tool with the direct relation to VET. Under its active labour market policy, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family supported and the National Labour Office funded accredited retraining activities. District labour offices provided for direct contacts with the unemployed. The Administrative Committee of the DLO (a self-governing body consisting of three representatives of each social partner) decided about labour policy implementation and its financing in the district within the framework policies agreed on upper levels.

Gradually, new tools were developed. E.g. in 2002 it was support for job creation for school graduates and provision of practice for school graduates. The second tool is used until now, however, subjected to several modifications (see the part on graduates in chapter 5.1).

Taking over the responsibility for the European Social Fund made the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family a key player in provision of social service, including the orchestration and implementation of active labour market policies. Furthermore, in 2004, the public legal National Labour Office was abolished and replaced by a state-managed network of 45 offices of labour, social affairs and family, headed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. As a consequence, social department and labour offices merged and has become managed by state authorities. Labour market policies became regulated by the new

Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. Since then, active labour market policies have been funded from the state budget as well as from the European Social Fund (see chapter 8.3).

Strengths and weaknesses, future changes

It is very positive that after a period of ignoring VET needs by policy makers there is an attempt to substantially redefine VET and employers relations by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET. A new model of power-sharing was urgently needed, nevertheless, the new architecture and legislation has been suggested based on the underlying assumption of availability of expertise needed for the new policy making. This is, however, not the case. There is no data, experts and know-how necessary for provision of background materials for evidence based policy making. Respective VET councils (see the example of initiative in chapter 4.3) need expertise and employers themselves need their own specialised experts able to monitor labour market needs and facilitate communication between employers and the education sector. There is a serious risk that the new governance will prioritise short-term measures and underestimate long-term effects not immediately visible and not easy to be converted into tradeable assets.

No dramatic legislative changes can be, however, expected with regard to IVET governance. The country is in the process of adjusting to dramatic changes. No doubt, corrections will be needed, as the recent practice of insufficient interlinking VET and the world of business has been replaced by the extreme subordination of the education sector to employers' expectations. The following period of digesting changes will make the difference and positive and negative impacts of this act will be gradually indentified.

CVET is dominantly market driven and dramatic changes in governance architecture are therefore not needed. Nevertheless, further progress in legislation is inevitable, as the institution building envisaged by the new Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning must be further clarified and backed, in particular with regard to institutions entitled to recognition of partial qualifications, as well as (even less clarified) validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Labour market training is institutionally backed by the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and despite voices considering a former model of the public-legal National Labour Office as more suitable, no changes can be expected in the future. Monitoring to improve targeting and efficiency of measures, in particular of training and graduate practice, to reduce the deadweight and improvement of career and guidance service, are much more needed than changes in governing institutions per se.

Regardless the architecture of VET governance, the crucial point to be opened for changes is financing VET. Besides the extremely weak point concerning financing IVET, i.e. the failure to counterbalance per capita funding of IVET by strong quality management already stressed earlier, new fiscal instruments in support of LLL including CVET and labour market training need to be rethought as well.

Segmented financing of VET, following the traditional segmentation of the provision of IVET, CVET and labour market training, represents very serious obstacles to provision of client-centred education/training. Cohesion of measures supporting human resource development in various forms could be achieved, and the idea of lifelong learning would be

turned from the slogan to implemented practice, only if traditional administrative barriers inhibiting integral VET service are overcome.

Example of initiative

1. Title of policy measure

Decentralisation and modernisation of public administration

The strategy paper Concept of Decentralisation and Modernisation of Public Administration was adopted by the government on 11th April 2000 and policies subsequently implemented (creation of regions in 2001, transfer of competences towards regional schools establishment since 2002, fiscal decentralisation based on sharing income tax in 2005). With regard to VET governance it was substantially complemented by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET and with regard to curriculum decentralisation by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

Outline of the policy/measure

(a) Rationale

- Strengthening subsidiarity, involvement of new actors including regional social partners;
- VET governance needing regional focus due to disparity in regional markets and segmentation of labour market and a multipartisan regional cooperation.

(b) Objectives and/or measurable targets

Reshaping the network of schools and school establishments as well as study and training branches

- to achieve more efficient allocation of means;
- to meet regional labour market demands and better reflect employers' requirements;
- to better address the demand for educational services by students (and parents);
- modernisation of administration.

(c) Target groups

- Primary target groups: local/regional policy makers and administrators including directors of schools;
- Secondary target groups: teachers, parents, students.

(d) Status of implementation

Decentralisation of public administration institutionally completed in 2005, regional VET reconstruction in progress, strengthened by the new Act on VET. Modernisation of public administration pending. Impact assessment and further refinement of the measure is necessary.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery

(a) Level of operation

The policy is implemented nation-wide with a dominant impact on regions.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger education/training /employment/ social policy approach?

It is an overarching policy influencing the policy making in all sectors and all levels. The impact on regions and reshaping regional networks of schools and provision of study and training branches is significant from the VET policy point of view.

(c) Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of Education;
- Regional school offices (state administration);
- Offices of regional self-government (managing schools);
- Directors of schools;
- Employers representatives, in particular (“sectoral assignees”, see chapter 4.3).

3. Evaluation

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact (including results of evaluation studies, if available).

Results of the decentralisation and modernisation reform are periodically monitored, however rather fragmented with a sectoral scope. There has been no comprehensive evaluation study conducted, presenting an overall impact and proposing changes. On the other hand, a very detailed analysis of socioeconomic development was conducted within the programming documents for structural funds. Below is an example pointing to one of the crucial weaknesses of decentralisation and modernisation of public administration reform: very little progress has been made in modernisation of public administration, as visible in particular from the weak development of eGovernance. “Informatisation of society is one of the areas, where the gap between Slovakia and EU member states is the biggest”, as stated in the 2007-2013 Operational Programme Informatisation of Society dated 29th June 2007. In the assessment of progress in the implementation of the “i2010” initiative focusing on eGovernment services Slovakia ranked last but one in the EU, according to this document. New regional VET governance (see the example of initiative in chapter 4.3) is just in process of creation and more time is needed for evaluation of the impact of the new legislation.

(b) Indicators of success; (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.)

- Local/regional institutions established;
- Competences redefined and transferred to new institutions in order to strengthen subsidiarity;
- Public policy became more transparent, cost effective, efficient in programming, implementing and monitoring.

With regard to VET policy alignment of the provision of VET to labour market needs

- restructuring a network of study and training branches;
- adjusting numbers and profiles to regional needs;

current fragmentation of policies aimed at IVET, CVET and training for the labour market replaced by the development and implementation of overarching lifelong learning policy.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies

Development of VET policies in coherence with other regional policies reflecting the socioeconomic needs of respective regions can be strengthened as a consequence of progress in the reform.

4. Conclusions

(a) Obstacles encountered

Although a transfer of competences from state to self-governing bodies might be considered a success, two risks are now more visible:

- “decentralisation of corruption”, as indicated by Transparency International due to insufficient control mechanisms on local/regional levels, i.a. due to weak local and regional mass-media;
- expanding administration, as a consequence of the insufficient pressure on cost effectiveness at sub-national levels;

Public administration modernisation has been insufficiently addressed, eServices development insufficiently supported, as a consequence of domination of the focus on decentralisation and creation of new administration, which was politically much more attractive to political parties than targeted efforts for efficiency and effectiveness of public administration.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

With regard to results of decentralisation

- too extensive administration (a dual system of state and self-governing offices) with a risk of overlapping;
- too many representatives (local self-government, regional self-government): 5 communal deputies per 1 000 inhabitants.

With regard to modernisation

- substantial improvement of eGovernance and provision of eservices.

With regard to VET policy

- rethinking financing of VET in order to stimulate human resource development instead of plain reduction of expenditures in public education:
- per capita funding should be further refined, as unified normatives for various VET programmes fully disregarding their cost demandness are not tenable without stronger fiscal incentives to employers to co-finance VET;
- the newly established VET Development Fund introduced by the Act on VET should be thoroughly monitored due to questioned effectiveness and efficiency.

5. Source, legend

Concept of Decentralisation and Modernisation of Public Administration,
www.mesa10.sk/subory/archiv/980982000_kocepcia_decentralizacie_2001.pdf
annexes to the concept,
www.mesa10.sk/subory/archiv/980982000_kocepcia_decentralizacie_2001.pdf
Operational Programme Informatisation of Society,
www.strukturalnefondy.sk/operacne-programy/informatizacia-spolocnosti or
www.opis.gov.sk

9. Progress in modernising European VET systems in the Copenhagen process and priorities for future cooperation

9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on development of national VET policies

European impact on main national VET initiatives

There were several impulses that contributed to main national VET relevant initiatives. It must be, however, stated that the decisive impulse to the crucial initiative, resulting in a rush adoption of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, came from the business sector, in particular from the automotive industry. Of course, within the business sector the pressure of the experience of international investors came to the expression, however, there is no essential direct influence of the Copenhagen process visible in the preparation and final wording of this act. No doubt, there are many documents and pieces of legislation explicitly referring to European initiatives and documents, as detailed earlier in chapter 3.1, however, with little direct impact on the provision of IVET. Clearly, the responsibility for political decisions is up to the national authorities and they often face different urgent challenges and are exposed to pressures of political parties with a higher priority than European recommendations. This does not mean that there is an opposition towards European cooperation in VET on the highest policy level. The main obstacle is a lack of English speaking experts able to join the international cooperation and the underdeveloped VET research, as a consequence of the catastrophic underestimation of the importance of investment and capacity building in research and development. Thus, European initiatives are reflected and they contribute to the development of policy papers in the broad sense, however, there is a lack of know-how needed for translation of the initiatives into practice and making concrete tools working. This is visible on the failure of Slovakia to implement quality assurance tools or apply guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, just to name typical examples. Lagging behind is substantially caused by a failure to make use of 2004-2006 ESF to fund projects directly focusing on respective Copenhagen tools. Thus, also as a consequence of common heritage and traditional links to Czech schools, educational authorities and research bodies, European initiatives often influence Slovak VET through the Czech experience. It is visible from the adoption of the so-called “type positions” know-how for the development of the National System of Occupations, which is in preparation by Trexima, s.r.o., Bratislava, making use of the experience of its former Czech mother firm Trexima, s.r.o., Zlín, and a subsequent renewal of the National System of Qualifications and its alignment to the type position based National System of Occupations and to EQF. Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, which has created conditions for the renewal of the system and restructuring respective qualifications and partial qualifications, as well as the new ESF project to be launched to develop and implement the renewed NSQ, all this builds upon the experience of the Czech systemic project aimed at the development of National System of Qualifications, conducted by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education in Prague within the ESF 2004-2006 programming period. It must be stressed here that this institute (under the different name) was responsible for supporting IVET in former Czechoslovakia, including Slovakia, and that the State Institute of Vocational Education was only established on the eve of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Similarly, there was a research institute with the seat in Bratislava (the Institute for Labour and Family Research is its descendent) responsible for supporting policies and research in labour and social sectors for the whole of Czechoslovakia.

There is a difference between IVET and CVET in reflection of European initiatives. Authorities and experts acting in CVET/LLL are apparently more sensitive to European initiatives than authorities and experts in IVET. This is naturally caused by the difference in the mandate of EU with regard to CVET/LLL and IVET and the difference in embeddedness of the two aforementioned segments of education/learning opportunities in the national culture, institutional infrastructure and tradition.

The European cooperation in VET is currently more important on the level of schools and education related organisations. Although the implementation of some Copenhagen tools is insufficiently promoted by official national policies in practice, there are bottom up activities focusing on respective Copenhagen tools, as a consequence of networking of practitioners rather than policy makers and as a consequence of the impact of LLP projects. Examples include Europass Mobility documents, increasingly used as a consequence of LLP supported mobilities, and diverse Leonardo da Vinci and ESF projects and projects with international participation, like the Leonardo da Vinci project EPANIL (European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning CZ/04/B/F/PP-168010, www.epanil.net) and the ESF project ATENA (Centre for the Development of Non-formal Learning and Personal Development, SOP HR 2004/1-189), both focused on validation of non-formal and informal learning, or the ESF project “Quality of School – a Guarantee of the Regional Schooling Reform” and the Leonardo da Vinci project QEPSE, both focused on improving the quality in education (see chapter 6.1).

Legal and/or regulatory changes to implement priorities of the Copenhagen process

The following are norms and/or policy papers influenced by the Copenhagen process and/or other future priorities agreed for improvement of European VET systems:

- Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic, approved by the government on 6th June 2007, reflecting a shift from the content based to competence based approach towards programming VET within the framework of decentralisation of curriculum development (with the framework set by the state and detailed programme elaborated by schools) and paving the way to learning outcomes based restructuring of the qualification system;
- Education Act No. 254/2008 Coll. on implementing a curriculum decentralisation reform and also translating the Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic into practice;
- Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET fundamentally changed the power sharing between the education sector authorities, including VET schools, businesses and other stakeholders. It corresponds with point 3.2 of the Bordeaux Communiqué stressing the importance of ensuring that the social partners and economic stakeholders are properly involved in defining and implementing VET policies. The subsequent Decree of Ministry of Education No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools stipulated in detail the responsibility of professional organisations in elaboration of sectoral development plans;
- The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance, adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, reflected inter alia the importance of validation of non-formal and informal learning indicating a breakdown in the implementation of respective Copenhagen process results into practice by the subsequent Act on Lifelong Learning: This topic was partly addressed by Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, adopted by the parliament in December 2009; it introduced into legislation the option to acquire partial qualifications based on prior experience and even (full) qualifications as the composition of partial qualifications;

- The Strategy mentioned in the previous point has also been aimed at improving guidance and counselling services to ease the transition from training to employment, and thus contribute to the objectives set out in the Council Resolution of 28th May 2004 on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe; it was followed i.a. by the Concept of Lifelong Guidance in the Slovak Republic, elaborated in 2009 under the supervision of National Forum on Lifelong Guidance, reflecting the Council resolution on better integration of lifelong learning guidance into lifelong learning strategies from 21st November 2008;
- A Proposal to Implement EQF in the Slovak Republic, approved by the government on 4th February 2009, setting the process of adoption of NQF aligned to EQF;
- Information on Forecasting Labour Market Needs and skill needs, submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and discussed on the government meeting on 14th October 2009 sensibilised all stakeholders for the support of systemic forecasting of labour needs in Slovakia, referring to the Cedefop Skillsnet project. It reflected importance of developing forward-planning mechanisms, aimed at focusing on jobs and skills at national level and across Europe, as stressed e.g. in point 3.1 of the Bordeaux Communiqué, and which corresponds to the conclusions of the European Council of 13th and 14th March 2008 and with the Council Resolution of 15th November 2007 on new skills for new jobs.

The crucial importance of EQF among the Copenhagen tools is seen by the Ministry of Education, as deadlines have been explicitly set: Working on referencing national qualification system to EQF officially launched in March 2010 should lead to the development of final version of NQF in 2011 and the national referencing report has to be prepared by March 2013, according to the Ministry of Education.

However, it must be stated that the Copenhagen process had a limited influence on the VET system, and the opportunities to exchange experiences with other countries are insufficiently used in policy making. The reflection of the Copenhagen process has not been fully translated into efforts to implement the Copenhagen tools into practice. Therefore, no example of initiative is offered. It would be possible to assess the impact of the Copenhagen process on the practice after the renewal of the National System of Qualifications and its alignment to EQF two or three years later.

9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

Slovakia joined the Lisbon and Copenhagen processes and the Education and Training 2010 work programme. It must be, however, admitted, as also discussed in detail in chapter 3.1 with regard to respective Copenhagen tools, that a straightforward process focused on making use of the European experience is not visible in the policy practice. Authorities respond to the European initiatives recalling them in policy papers. The main strategy paper Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 – a reform programme, and the National Reform Programme 2008-2010 did so as well. Furthermore, these initiatives are reflected within regular reporting on the implementation of Education and Training 2010 work programme and the National Reform Programme to the European Commission. There is, however, no prompt translation into practice visible. Not asked for the support by decision makers, researchers and experts insufficiently discuss translation of these initiatives into practice. A theoretical discourse dominates in IVET and fighting urgent national challenges is often seen in the national context only and not in the European or even global context. There is more concerted

approach visible in CVET/LLL and in youth related policies, within which also VET is regarded. It can be, however, stated that the fully new legislative background for VET, established in 2008 and 2009 (Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll., Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll., Act on Pedagogical Staff No. 317/2009 Coll. and Act on LLL No. 568/2009 Coll.), creates good conditions for international comparison and learning from the international experience. Making work of all these acts and detailing respective stipulations by bylaws will force the rethinking process about details and/or obstacles endangering implementation. International experience might prove very useful within this rethinking process.

Peer learning activities

The objective of study visits, organised in cooperation with Cedefop, is to support policy development and cooperation at the European level. Unfortunately, Slovakia insufficiently makes use of the opportunity to learn from the international experience. Even, it was for a long period the only EU country not able to organise a study visit and therefore subjected to criticism by Cedefop. There are, however, signs of improvement. A number of applications for study visit grants increased substantially in 2009 (with 45 applications submitted in comparison to 23 in 2008 and 29 in 2007). Similarly, an increase in the number of proposals to organise study visit is also visible. In Catalogue 2010 – 2011 three Slovak institutions are offering study visit, while two were included in Catalogue 2009-2010 and only one in Catalogue 2008-2009.

Nevertheless, national authorities have failed to recognise the importance of peer learning so far. There is no specific national strategy for collecting experience by targeted groups of professionals and with regard to specified goals and there is no strategy for capitalisation from peer learning. The participants usually disseminate the results from the study visits within in house activities and/or in a form of reporting in newspapers or journals, without a substantial effort aimed at a systemic change and/or a broader impact on education/learning systems.

9.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET

Slovakia cooperates with countries beyond EU borders predominantly based on bilateral agreements between the Slovak Government and the government of respective state, or an agreement between the Slovak Ministry of Education and respective education ministries. As of February 2010, there were 41 bilateral agreements in place, out of which 20 with countries outside the EU. The cooperation comprises mobilities of secondary and higher education students (including PhD) for various types of studies, such as short-term or one-term scholarships, several years of higher education studies or the whole study, summer language schools, research scholarships, Fulbright scholarship (in case of the USA), etc., as well as mobilities of teachers, in this case focused more on short-term scholarships, language courses and research scholarships. Majority of the mobilities are focused on higher education students.

The following table presents data on Slovak students and teachers sent based on the international agreements into countries outside the EU in 2007 and 2008.

Table 9.1: Number of students and teachers sent to non-EU countries in 2007 and 2008

Country	2007						2008					
	SS	HEI	PhD	Sec/HEI teachers	WS	Total	SS	HEI	PhD	Sec/HEI teachers	WS	Total
Belarus		8				8		3				3
China		26				26		31				31
Croatia		1	1			2		5	1			6
Egypt						0		1				1
India		2			4	6						0
Indonesia					18	18					20	20
Iceland		2				2		3				3
Israel			1			1		1		1		2
Japan		5				5		1			3	4
Korea		3				3					2	2
Mexico										1		1
Norway		5	2			7		5	1	1		7
Russia		68	5	4		77		98	3	3		104
Serbia		4				4		7				7
Switzerland		1	4			5			3			3
Turkey		3				3		2	1			3
Ukraine		6		2		8		5		4		9
USA					21	21					19	19
UWC-SS	13					13	13					13
Total	13	134	13	6	43	209	13	162	9	10	44	238

Source: Ministry of Education

Notes: SS – secondary students, HEI – higher education students, PhD – 3rd cycle of higher education (students in doctoral studies), WS – without specification, UWC-SS United World Colleges: Bosnia a Herzegovina, Canada, Norway, Italy, United Kingdom, USA, Hong Kong, mobilities are focused on grammar schools, number also includes mobilities into some EU countries

Moreover, within the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS), 432 and 114 higher education students and teachers participated at mobilities in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 academic years, respectively, into Central and East European countries, including non-EU countries.

In case of received students the situation is quite different. The number of foreign students is much lower. They are more interested in study within the full or partial higher education programme than in scholarships or short-term mobilities.

The following table presents the data on students and trainees received based on the international agreements from countries outside the EU in 2007 and 2008.

Table 9.2: Number of students and trainees received from non-EU countries in 2007 and 2008

Country	2007						2008					
	Full HE	Partial HE	SCH	SM	Grant*	Total	Full HE	Partial HE	SCH	SM	Grant*	Total
Belarus	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	8	1	0	0	9
China	8	0	0	0	3	11	4	7	0	0	4	15
Croatia	0	2	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	2
Russia	0	2	4	0	0	6	0	4	2	0	0	6
Serbia	2	0	8	0	0	10	0	2	2	0	0	4

Ukraine	0	9	1	8	0	18	0	12	4	0	0	16
Total	10	13	15	8	3	49	6	33	9	0	4	52

Source: Ministry of Education

Notes: HE – whole study programme, SCH – scholarship, SM – short-term mobility, * grants of the Ministry of Education

Within the initiative of the Slovak Government focused on social scholarships to secondary school students for study at foreign secondary schools the government covered scholarships for 4 secondary students to enable them to study in Russia in the 2008/2009 school year. The rest of total 323 students were placed in schools in the EU countries.

In 2005, the Slovak Government approved the establishment of “National Scholarship Programme for the Support of Mobility of Students, PhD students, University Teachers and Researchers” (NSP), funded by the Ministry of Education. The aim of the NSP is to support the mobility of students and PhD students of Slovak higher education institutions to study abroad, or the mobility of foreign students, PhD students, university teachers and researchers into Slovak institutions.

The following table offers a picture of distribution of grants for Slovak Master and PhD students by receiving countries.

Table 9.3: Distribution of grants for Slovak Master and PhD students

Country	2006/2007		2007/2008		2008/2009		2009/2010		Total	
	Master	PhD	Master	PhD	Master	PhD	Master	PhD	Master	PhD
Australia			1	3		1		1	1	5
Bulgaria		2								2
Canada			1	1		1	1	3	2	5
Chile							1		1	
China					1			2	1	2
Croatia							2	1	2	1
Cuba					1				1	
Egypt							1		1	
Ecuador	1								1	
Iceland			1						1	
Israel		2			2				2	2
Japan					1	1			1	1
Mexico	1			1					1	1
Norway	3		5		4	4	4	3	16	7
Russia		1			1	1	5		6	2
Senegal				1						1
Singapore						1		1		2
South Africa				1			1		1	1
Switzerland		1	1	1	2	1		2	3	5
Turkey					2		2		4	
USA		4		9	2	4	1	5	3	22
Venezuela								1		1
Total	5	10	9	17	16	14	18	19	48	60
Total grants awarded*	77	101	83	113	90	95	113	89	363	398

Source: The Slovak Academic Information Agency

Notes: * including grants for mobilities into EU countries

The NSP also included the so-called travel grants used by successful applicants for covering their travel costs. Most of applicants indicated in the table above were also awarded the travel grant. Some applicants received just the travel grant. In addition to mentioned non-EU countries also grants to cover travel costs to countries like Azerbaijan, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Taiwan, Ukraine, or Vietnam were provided.

The last applications for the first phase of the NSP were submitted in autumn 2009. In April 2009 the government decided on continuation of the programme for the period 2010/2011 to 2015/2015. The programme will comply with the priorities set in the policy document Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21. The Programme's details and conditions of eligibility for applications are periodically published at www.scholarships.sk, as well as on the website of the managing authority (www.saia.sk).

There are no specific policies focused on cooperation with countries beyond EU borders in VET, based on the transfer of national experience. There are of course individual experts or NGOs partly or indirectly participating on VET improvement of other countries, however, not based on the national policies looking for supporting VET systems reforms in other countries systemically. Therefore, no example of initiative is offered.

10. Authors, bibliographical references and sources

10.1 Authors

Written by

Juraj Vantuch, Comenius University, Faculty of Education

Dagmar Jelínková, State Institute of Vocational Education

with direct contributions from

Eneke Hanzelová, Institute of Labour and Family Studies (examples of initiative in parts on older workers, learners with special needs, returners to the labour market and long-term unemployed in chapter 5.1)

Miloš Novák, Office of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Department of Education and Human Resources (chapter 6.5 and example of initiative in chapter 4.4)

Authors express thanks for consultations and/or submitting background materials to

Dagmar Augustínska, Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation

Lucia Auxtová, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section for Lifelong Learning

Darina Berčáková, Secondary Automotive School, J. Jonáša str., Bratislava

Jana Cesnaková, Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Jana Čabalová, Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Zoja Čutková, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

Michaela Dobošová, Slovak Telekom, a.s.

Ján Dutko, Ministry of Interior of the SR

Alžbeta Ferenčíčová, Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Irena Fonodová, Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation

Marián Galan, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section of Regional Schooling

Štefan Grajčár, Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Ružena Grochová, Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Jana Halková, Grammar School Rožňava

Eneke Hanzelová, Institute of Labour and Family Studies

Peter Heidinger, Statistical Office of the SR

Pavel Holík, Office of the Government of the SR

Gabriela Horecká, State Institute of Vocational Education

Dagmar Hupková, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section of International Cooperation and Academic Mobilities

Irena Jankovičová, State Institute of Vocational Education

Jaroslav Juriga, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section for Lifelong Learning

Anna Jurkovičová, State Institute of Vocational Education

Eva Kaczová, Ministry of Education of the SR, National Europass Centre

Branislav Kaniansky, Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Zuzana Kostolná, Institute of Labour and Family Studies

Miriám Kováčiková, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section of European Affairs

Marta Kuhnová, Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation

Dušan Kulich, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section for Lifelong Learning
 Katarína Lanáková, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR
 Jana Miháliková, IUVENTA Slovak Youth Institute, Department of Youth Work Development
 Monika Neuschlová, AGEMSOFT, a.s.
 Miloš Novák, Office of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Department of Education and Human Resources
 Miroslav Palec, Intenda Foundation
 Mária Paveleková, Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation
 Ivan Pešout, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section for Lifelong Learning
 František Priesol, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section of Regional Schooling
 Vlasta Puchovská, State Institute of Vocational Education
 Boris Sloboda, Ministry of Education of the SR, Section for Lifelong Learning
 Ivan Stankovský, State Institute of Vocational Education
 Michal Stuška, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR
 Peter Špičan, State Institute of Vocational Education
 Denisa Turčíková, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR
 Karla Wursterová, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the SR
 Viera Žatkovičová, State Institute of Vocational Education

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Accreditation Commission of the Slovak Republic Government (Akreditačná komisia vlády Slovenskej republiky, AK)
www.akredkom.sk

Agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the Structural Funds of the European Union (Agentúra Ministerstva školstva SR pre štrukturálne fondy EÚ)
www.asfeu.sk

Association of Municipalities and Villages of Slovakia (Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska, ZMOS)
www.zmos.sk

Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce sociálnych vecí a rodiny, ÚPSVaR)
www.upsvar.sk

Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky)
www.zbierka.sk

European Social Fund (Európsky sociálny fond)
www.esf.gov.sk

Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, ÚIPŠ)
www.uips.sk

Institute for Labour and Family Research (Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, IVPR)
www.sspr.gov.sk

Integrated System of Type Positions (Integrovaný systém typových pozícií, ISTP)
www.istp.sk

Ministry of Agriculture of the SR (Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva SR, MP SR)

www.land.gov.sk

Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR (Ministerstvo výstavby a regionálneho rozvoja SR, MVRR SR)

www.build.gov.sk

Ministry of Economy of the SR (Ministerstvo hospodárstva SR, MH SR)

www.economy.gov.sk

Ministry of Education of the SR (Ministerstvo školstva SR, MŠ SR)

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Ministry of Finance of the SR (Ministerstvo financií SR, MF SR)

www.finance.gov.sk

Ministry of Health of the SR (Ministerstvo zdravotníctva SR, MZ SR)

www.health.gov.sk

Ministry of Interior of the SR (Ministerstvo vnútra SR, MV SR)

www.minv.sk

Ministry of Justice of the SR (Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR, MS SR)

www.justice.gov.sk

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, MPSVR SR)

www.employment.gov.sk

National Institute for Certified Measurement in Education (Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania, NÚCEM)

www.nucem.sk

National Institute for Education (Štátny pedagogický ústav, ŠPÚ)

www.statpedu.sk

National Strategic Reference Framework SR (Národný strategický referenčný rámec SR)

www.strukturalnefondy.sk

National VET Council (Rada vlády SR pre odborné vzdelávanie a prípravu)

www.radavladyyovp.sk

SAIA, n.o. Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA, n.o. Slovenská akademická informačná agentúra, SAIA)

www.saia.sk

Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (Slovenská akademická asociácia pre medzinárodnú spoluprácu, SAAIC)

www.saaic.sk

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www.siov.sk/statne-vzdelavacie-programy/9411s

www.statpedu.sk/sk/sections/view/statne-vzdelavacie-programy/statny-vzdelavaci-program

State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania, ŠIOV)

www.siov.sk

Statistical Office of the SR (Štatistický úrad SR, ŠÚ SR)

www.statistics.sk

Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o. (Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o.)

www.trexima.sk

10.3 List of abbreviations

ALMP	Active labour market policy
BPD	Basic pedagogical documents (základné pedagogické dokumenty)
CERYS	Centre for European and Regional Youth Studies
CPDS	Continuing professional development system
CPS	Complementary pedagogical study (doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium)
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Framework
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
ECVET	European credit system for VET
ENQA-VET	European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Official currency of the European Union
EÚ SAV	Ekonomický ústav Slovenskej akadémie vied (Institute of Economic Research of Slovak Academy of Sciences)
GDP	Gross domestic product
HEI	Higher education institution
ICT	Information communication technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISTP	Integrovaný systém typových pozícií (Integrated System of Type Positions)
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
IVPR	Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny (Institute of Labour and Family Research)
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLG	Lifelong guidance
LLL	Lifelong learning
LLLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
MH	Ministerstvo hospodárstva (Ministry of Economy)
MF	Ministerstvo financií (Ministry of Finance)
MP	Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva (Ministry of Agriculture)

MPC	Metodicko-pedagogické centrum (Methodological-Pedagogical Centre)
MPSVR	Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)
MŠ	Ministerstvo školstva (Ministry of Education)
MV	Ministerstvo vnútra (Ministry of Interior)
MVRR	Ministerstvo výstavby a regionálneho rozvoja (Ministry of Construction and Regional Development)
MZ	Ministerstvo zdravotníctva (Ministry of Health)
NACE	Nomenclature générale des activités économiques (General Classification of Economic Activities of the European Community)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSO	National System of Occupations
NSQ	National System of Qualifications
NÚCEM	Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania (National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPS	Purchasing power standard
QMS	Quality management system
R&D	Research and development
SAAIC	Slovenská akademická asociácia pre medzinárodnú spoluprácu (Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation)
SCTF	Slovak Centre of Training Firms (Slovenské centrum cvičných firiem)
SITES	Second Information Technology in Education Study
SKK	Slovak crown (currency)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SOP	Sectoral Operational Programme
SPD	Single Programming Document
SSS	Secondary specialised school (stredná odborná škola)
SVS	Secondary vocational school (stredné odborné učilište)
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
ŠIOV	Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania (State Institute of Vocational Education)
ŠPÚ	Štátny pedagogický ústav (National Institute for Education)
ŠÚ	Štatistický úrad (Statistical Office)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UOE	UNESCO, OECD, Eurostat
ÚIPŠ	Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva (Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education)
ÚPSVaR	Ústredie práce sociálnych vecí a rodiny (Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)
ÚV	Úrad vlády (Office of the Government)

ÚVP FSEV UK	Ústav verejnej politiky a ekonómie Fakulty sociálnych a ekonomických vied Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave (Institute of Public Policy Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University in Bratislava)
VAT	Value added tax
VET	Vocational education and training