

## Slovakia - An olympiad to increase pupils' interest in technology

The national round of the Technology Olympiad held on 14 and 15 May brought together lower secondary schools pupils, teachers and organisers willing to reverse the decline in the attractiveness of technical secondary studies in Slovakia.

The table below, giving the numbers of graduates from grammar schools and secondary VET schools, shows that the attractiveness of grammar schools has increased substantially while VET schools have become less attractive.

Graduates from secondary schools in 1989 and 2011 (in numbers and %)

Type of school	1989		2011	
	N	%	N	%
General	10 463	14.51	18 796	27.52
VET	61 645	85.49	49 509	72.48
Total	72 108	100	68 305	100

*Source: Institute of Information and Forecasting in Education*

This table does not show the dramatic decline in ISCED 3C studies and the shift towards ISCED 3A studies also within the VET stream. VET school graduates willing to continue on to tertiary studies are free to decide on their field of study, and many of them opt for humanities or social science programmes. As a result, there is a lack of workers with appropriate technical skills in the labour market.

Two remedial actions are being signalled: a controversial attempt to regulate more strongly by law the flow of students into secondary general programmes and also to social science and humanities at tertiary level; and a positive response on the part of the authorities to the criticism that technical skills are underestimated in compulsory education.

In Slovakia, there has been a significant deterioration in conditions for the delivery of technical education, with only 20% of weekly teaching hours being compulsory compared with the pre-2008 curricula. The current state curricula framework allocates 1 hour a week in lower secondary education for the teaching of technology. Schools can add more hours to this subject, as 31 optional weekly hours out of total of 146 are available to meet the priorities of schools and pupils. Nevertheless, teachers and experts in the field attack the 2008 reform and argue that the subject is suffering because there is less time available for it and because of a long-term deterioration in equipment in schools. These conditions contribute to the decline in interest in secondary VET.

Since 1995, the Department of Technology and Information Technology of the Faculty of Education of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra has held a competition focusing on the technical skills of lower secondary pupils to offset this unfavourable development. Now, the 'Technology Olympiad' is fully recognised and officially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

The competition consists of two parts: a knowledge test covering topics taught in the subject Technology, and a practical assignment requiring the constructing of some kind of product from materials. A dedicated portal for basic school technology teachers with information on the Olympiad has been created.

## Links

- [A dedicated portal for basic school technology teachers with information on the Olympiad](#)

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