

Vocational Education and Training in Europe

Country report

Slovakia

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Authors:

Juraj Vantuch, Faculty of Education, Comenius University

Dagmar Jelínková, State Institute of Vocational Education

with direct contribution from

Štefan Grajcár, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Part 8)

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1. General context – framework for the knowledge society

1.1 Political and socio-economic context

Established on 1st January 1993 after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia is a parliamentary democracy with a one-chamber parliament of 150 members elected for four-year terms. Political parties are allotted seats according to the percentage of votes they receive in direct elections. The president, elected for a five-year term by a two-round popular vote, is the head of state with no substantial executive powers. Slovakia is a member of the OECD (2000), NATO and EU (both in 2004). The country is composed of 8 state administration and self-governing regions. Transfer of executive competences from public administration bodies to self-governing regions and municipalities started in 1990s, with substantial changes in the education sector only in 2002, followed by fiscal decentralization effective since 2005. Income of self-governing regions and municipalities however depends substantially on centrally-collected income tax, finally making up a substantial part of their budgets after its redistribution (see part 9.1).

Despite recent very high economic growth (10.4 % in 2007 and 6.4 % in 2008, Eurostat), Slovakia in long terms suffered from high unemployment (11.1 % in 2007 and 9.5 % in 2008, Eurostat LFS) and low employment rates (60.7 % in 2007 and 62.3 % in 2008, Eurostat LFS). Long-term unemployment rates remained even during these best times, among the highest in the EU (8.3 % in 2007 and 6.6 % in 2008, Eurostat) hitting predominantly the Roma minority. In particular, the Roma minority living in segregated settlements lives in high risk of social exclusion. Furthermore, south-central and eastern Slovakia regions lag behind western Slovakia, which profits from a developed infrastructure and huge foreign investment, and in particular behind the Bratislava region, which is the 19th richest among EU NUTS II regions. Eastern Slovakia accounted for 44 %, Central Slovakia 49.2 %, Western Slovakia 62.8 %, while the Bratislava Region 148.7 % of GDP per capita in PPS of EU NUTS II average, according to the latest 2006 Eurostat statistics. This wide disparity in distribution of wealth across the country however to a large extent reflects the specificity in accountancy and statistics typical for capital regions rather than the wealth of the Bratislava region inhabitants themselves.

Although medium-term macroeconomic forecasts were very positive with very high GDP growth (e.g. 6.4 % for 2009, according to Eurostat) and a further decrease in unemployment was expected, the global economic crisis also hit Slovakia hard. A small open economy heavily dependent on export (mainly cars and electrical devices) faces a dramatic economic downturn. Its GDP was down by 11.2 % in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the previous quarter, and the percentage change in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the same quarter of 2008 was - 5.4 % in contrast to - 4.5 % of EU27, according to Eurostat. Limited supply of gas to plants and their subsequent production cut off, caused by the turning off of natural gas to Slovakia during the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, contributed to this decline. The Statistical Office forecasted negative growth; - 3.5 % for 2009; however a deeper fall (- 4.2 %) is feared by the National Bank of Slovakia.

The fall in GDP is substantially caused by the decline in external demand from large western economies and fuelled by induced unemployment and the subsequent decline in household consumption. Household consumption decline is not influenced by the originally expected increase of inflation after entry into the Eurozone. In addition to the crisis, household consumption also declined due to shoppers going to comparably cheaper neighbouring countries. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, facing deterioration of their currencies' exchange rates to euro, became cheaper for Slovak purchasers coming with euro. The unemployment rate for youth aged 15-24 years increased to 22.4 % in the first quarter of 2009 in contrast to 19.0 % in the first quarter of 2008, according to LFS Eurostat data, with further deterioration expected due to decreasing opportunities for school graduates to get employed. There were 336 926 unemployed registered with labour offices in May 2009 in contrast to 222 260 in May 2008, of whom there are 19 705 and 10 427 graduates below 25 years in the respective periods. Furthermore, many people employed abroad are returning home. In the first quarter of 2009 there were 128.8 thousand people working abroad, according to Statistical Office LFS data, which is 47.9 thousand less compared to the first quarter of 2008.

1.2 Population and demographics

The country has an area of 49 034 km² with 5 379 455 inhabitants and a population density of 110 inhabitants per km² (Census, 26th May 2001). A total of 55 % of the population lives in urban areas and 45 % in rural areas. There were 5 412 254 inhabitants in Slovakia as of 31st December 2008, according to the Statistical Office (ŠÚ, *Štatistický úrad*) estimation and there are 5 411 062 inhabitants estimated for 2009 by Eurostat. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia has experienced a huge decrease in the birth rate and an 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 amounted to 57 360 in 2008.

Slovakia currently still enjoys a favourable old age dependency ratio far below EU27 average (e.g. 16.95 % and 25.9 % in 2010 Eurostat projection), however gradually deteriorating 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.

Per capita financing introduced in 2004 was aimed at forcing the merging and closing of schools with low enrolments. A demographic trend broken down by age groups offered in Table 1 indicates the need for further restructuring of school networks, except kindergartens already enjoying a return of interest and surplus of demand over available places.

Table 1: Age-specific demographic trends by age groups until 2025

	Total	0-24			25-59			60+		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
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
2007*	5397766	1695403	867123	828280	2808697	1402146	1406551	893666	351826	541840
2007*(%)	100.00	31.41	16.06	15.34	52.03	25.98	26.06	16.56	6.52	10.04

Source: INFOSTAT 2007 update of Demographic prognosis 2002

Note: * Mid-year population (2008 Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic)

In VET schools a demographic decline, per capita financing and surplus of places at higher status ISCED 3A VET and ISCED 3A general education study branches, caused low enrolment in lower status studies, in particular ISCED 3C training branches. It is to a large extent a consequence of two failures:

- insufficient graduates quality check by educational authorities and employers to maintain quality standards; and
- lacking instrument counterbalancing the per capita financing, which stimulated schools at risk of low enrolment to disregard labour market needs and adjusting profile of graduates to fit employers demand.

1.3 Economy and labour market indicators

Economic composition of the country

Since its independence Slovakia has been all the time characterised by a strong share of employed in industry (39.5 % employed in 2008), regardless of changes in other sectors, e.g. a decrease of employed people in agriculture from 10.2 % in 1994 down to 4.0 % in 2008, and growth in the service sector from 50.1 % in 1994 to 56.5 % in 2008. For further comparison see Table 1 in the [annex](#) with 2003-2008 employment distribution by NACE categories.

Strong emphasis on manufacturing and construction is also visible from comparison with EU27 of employment in selected NACE sectors.

Table 2: Employment by economic activity, age 15+, (in 1000s) in 2008 (second quarter) in EU27 and Slovakia

Economic activities – NACE Rev.1.1	Primary sector and utilities		Manufacturing		Construction		Distribution and transport		Business and other services		Non marketed services		Total
	A_B_C_E		D		F		G_H_I		J_K_O_P_Q		L_M_N		
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons
EU27	11508.8	5.2	34500.5	15.5	16225.2	7.3	49200.5	22.2	38025.2	17.1	47045.7	21.2	221873.1
SK	154.3	6.4	648.6	27.0	251.6	10.5	580.5	24.1	291	12.1	478	19.9	2404.8

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 12th March 2009

In parallel to the increase of employment in manufacturing and construction, a lack of graduates of an appropriate number and structure was indicated in the automotive industry, electrical engineering and construction sectors.

Table 3: 2008-1998 comparison in employment in selected sectors in Slovakia (in thousands)

Economic activities – NACE Rev.1.1	Agriculture, hunting and forestry (A)	Manufacturing (D)	Construction (C)	TOTAL
SK 2008 q2	99.3	648.6	251.6	2404.8
SK 1998 q2	178.9	577.2	203.3	2201.4

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 26th May 2009 (age 15+, LFS second quarter)

In particular, the boom in the automotive industry resulted in the need for creation of 53 000 new jobs between 2006 and 2010, almost doubling 2005 data of 57 376 people employed in this sector, according to the Automotive Industry Association (*Združenie automobilového priemyslu*). Nevertheless, ISCED 3C graduates were dominantly required for these jobs. This might create a serious problem due to a trendy shift in enrolment from ISCED 3C to ISCED 3A studies since the 1990s. Subsequently, cohorts of graduates changed accordingly and contribute permanently to the mismatch in the qualification structure in demand and supply. 2009 development however reduces at least the preliminary demand for new staff, as all Slovak carmakers were forced into manufacturing interruptions, and dismissals were also observed as a consequence of the economic crisis.

Employment and unemployment

The following table offers the distribution of employment by level of education in 2008 in comparison with unemployment.

Table 4: Employment and unemployment by level of education in 2008 (in thousands)

	People in employment	Unemployed
Total	2 433.8	257.5
ISCED 0-1	0.0	0.3
ISCED 2	109.9	71.6
ISCED 3C (CoA)	769.4	93.4
ISCED 3C (without CoA)	60.5	4.8
ISCED 3A (MSLC) + CoA	126.0	11.5
ISCED 3A (MSLC) GEN	103.6	8.6
ISCED 3A (MSLC) VET	857.4	52.0
ISCED 5B	19.5	1.2
ISCED 5A – Bc	24.7	1.2
ISCED 5A – M	356.1	12.7
ISCED 6	6.6	0.2

Source: ŠÚ, LFS annual data

Notes: CoA – Certificate of Apprenticeship (*výučný list*), MSLC – “Maturita” School-leaving Certificate (*vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*)

GEN – general education stream, VET vocational stream

Unemployment data from this table indicates three large groups of unemployed: ISCED 2, 3C and 3A VET educated were important sources for further recruitment for assembling plants. (See also Tables 2 and 3 with respective trends, 2004-2008 employment distribution and 2004-2008 unemployment distributions by level of education in the [annex](#)).

The following table indicates the very low employment rates of the low-skilled population (ISCED 0-2) and elderly population (aged 50-64) compared to EU27 signalling, where there were opportunities to retrain people to meet labour market needs.

Table 5: Employment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%)

	Year	2002			2005			2007		
	Age group	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU27	Total	36.7(i)	77.3(i)	50.2(i)	36.1	78.1	53.3	37.4	80	55.6
	ISCED 0-2	25.7(i)	65.9(i)	40.5(i)	24.7	66.2	42.5	25.3	67.5	44.2
	ISCED 3-4	47.8(i)	79.1(i)	54.3(i)	47.1	79.4	56.8	48.9	81.4	59.2
	ISCED 5-6	61.7(i)	88.2(i)	71.8(i)	60.5	88	73.6	62	89	74.9
	No answer	15.3(i)	73.4(i)	37.9(i)	4.6	73.7	5	5.1	74.6	6.6
Slovakia	Total	26.7	75.4	42.6	25.6	75.5	48.8	27.6	78.5	52.2
	ISCED 0-2	1.6	38.8	19.4	1.9	30.4	22.6	2.5	32.7	26.2
	ISCED 3-4	44.1	77.4	47.6	45.1	77.9	52.5	47.8	80.8	55
	ISCED 5-6	65.2	91.7	72.5	69.1	88.8	71.8	62	88.1	74.7

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 17th March 2009

Note: (i) See explanatory text in Eurostat at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsq_esms.htm

Some data at risk of misinterpretation must be however explained.

Low employment rate of young people aged 15-24 can be partly explained by their continuing attendance in education and training (usually till 18 for ISCED 3C and 19 for ISCED 3A) as Slovakia is, with 91.3 % ISCED 3 graduates aged 20-24 in 2007, far over the respective 2010 benchmark 85 %.

Low employment rate of 50-64 aged people is biased by retirement age, as is visible e.g. from the 67.4 % employment rate of 50-59 aged compared to the 52.4 % of 50-64 aged in 2007. Nevertheless, a higher employment rate of the elderly is permanently considered as one of the main aims of the active labour market policy.

Nevertheless, despite improvement the total employment rates are still below the EU 2010 targets (total employment rate 70 %, female employment rate 60 %). In 2008, the total employment rate of the population aged 15-64 was 62.3 % (60.7 %, 59.4 %, 57.7 %, 56.9 % and 57.6 % in 2007-2003), while the employment rate of women was 54.6 % (53.0 %, 51.9 %, 50.9 %, 50.9 % and 52.2 % in 2007-2003).

The following table confirms the vulnerability of low-skilled people. The comparison of 2002 to 2007 data suggests that economic growth was better used by educated people. e.g. the decrease in unemployment in 2007 of ISCED 3-4 educated is markedly stronger than of ISCED 0-2 educated, as visible from the table below.

Table 6: Unemployment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%)

	ISCED level	2002			2005			2007		
	Age group	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU27	Total	17.8(i)	8.2(i)	6.6(i)	18.5	8	6.7	15.4	6.4	5.5
	ISCED 0-2	19.8(i)	11.3(i)	7.4(i)	21.7	11.6	7.8	19.9	10.3	6.9
	ISCED 3-4	17.5(i)	8.4(i)	7.5(i)	17.2	8.2	7.6	13.3	6.1	5.8
	ISCED 5-6	12.5(i)	4.5(i)	3.5(i)	14.1	4.7	3.8	11.3	3.7	3.2
	No answer	14(i)	7.1(i)	6.7(i)	27.5	:	:	20.1	:	:
Slovakia	Total	37.7	15.5	15.1	30.1	14.6	13.5	20.3	10.2	9.4
	ISCED 0-2	75.1	48.1	28.9	76.8	57.4	34.1	66.2	50.3	28.5
	ISCED 3-4	35.6	14.2	14.7	25.2	13	11.8	15.3	8.8	7.8
	ISCED 5-6	21.4(u)	3.1	:	17.3(u)	4.2	5.2	19(u)	3.5	2.9(u)

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 10th March 2009

Notes: (i) See explanatory text in Eurostat at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsq_esms.htm
(u) - Unreliable or uncertain data

The stubbornly high unemployment rates of the ISCED 0-2 educated indicates a serious problem. According to LFS, in 2007, there were 38 700 people aged 20-24, 147 100 aged 25-49 and 181 000 aged 50-64 with only ISCED 0-2 level of education, representing in total a 366 800 army of low-skilled and hard-to-employ people without further training. Even more, initial training should be adjusted accordingly, not to leave low achievers without qualification.

In addition to the low-educated, unemployment hits elderly and young people extraordinarily hard. In 2007, the unemployment rate in the age group 50-64 was 9.4 % decreasing from 15.1 % in 2002. In 2008, the unemployment rate in age group 50-64 was 7.6 %, while it was 5.2 % in EU27.

Despite a decrease of unemployed youth aged 15-24 from 145 000 in 2002 to 59 800 in 2007 and 51 500 in 2008, and a decrease of respective youth unemployment rate from 37.7 % to 20.3 % and further to 19 % compared to 15.4 % in EU27 in 2008, youth transition into the labour market remains a problem. The decrease in the absolute numbers of the unemployed can be explained by the decrease in population and boosted post-secondary education. The employment rate of youth aged 15-24 is constantly low (slightly over 25 % in 2002 to 2007). In 2008 it was 26.2 %, compared to 37.6 % in EU27.

Difficulties with employment of graduates and indication of worsening are visible from the following data: There were 12 683 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 at 19 404 as of September 2008. However, no traditional subsequent decrease can be seen, as there were 19 705 graduates registered in May 2009, according to data of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, *Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*).

Strong growth in the economy as well as opening labour markets in EU countries recently reduced the numbers of unemployed. (See 2003-2008 data according to different measurement methodologies in Table 4 in the [annex](#)). Further decrease of unemployment has been stopped by the global crisis, and the Slovak economy, which is extensively exporting cyclically vulnerable industrial products (e.g. cars, LCD panels), has to face problems due to decreasing demand in foreign markets.

The increase in unemployment according to ÚPSVaR data is dramatic, with 336 926 registered in May 2009 in contrast to 222 260 in May 2008, as it represents over 114 000 people more, and the growth index is over 150 %. The disposable registered unemployment rate increased from 8.4 % as of 31st December 2008 to 11.39 % in May 2009, back to the 2005 figures.

The unemployment rate's decrease before the crisis was also accompanied by the decrease of persons receiving unemployment benefits. There were 20 134 beneficiaries in December 2007, in comparison to 42 028 beneficiaries in December 2004 and 100 427 in January 2004. However, in December 2008 the monthly number of benefit receivers raised to 25 719, soaring up to 54 316 in May 2009.

The unemployment rates for women are higher than rates for men. In 2008 the unemployment rate for women was 10.9 % compared to the total unemployment rate of 9.5 %. This difference is small, but slightly increasing over the years. (In 2007 it was 12.7 % and 11.1 %, in 2006 14.7 % and 13.4 %, in 2005 17.2 % and 16.3 %, in 2004 19.2 % and 18.2 %, and in 2003 17.7 % and 17.6 %, respectively.)

The following weak points from 2008 LFS statistics are worth stressing: 64.5 thousand unemployed people have never been employed, 135.8 thousand were unemployed over two years, and an additional 34.2 thousand were unemployed for more than one year and less than two years. The long-term unemployment rate (12 months and more) was 6.6 % in 2008, for a long time the worst among current EU27 countries (11.7 % in 2005, 10.2 % in 2006 and 8.3 % in 2007).

Public expenditure on education

Ministry of Finance (MF, *Ministerstvo financií*) data illustrates a severe decrease in expenditure on education in terms of percentage of the GDP from 4.75 % in 1995 down to 4 % in 2004, followed by a slight increase, however permanently below the EU25 average.

Table 7: Expenditure on education* in % of the GDP and in % of total public expenditures

	1995	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
% of GDP	4.75	4.17	4.17	4.03	4.15	4.15	3.89	3.93
% of total public expenditure	9.76	9.70	9.90	10.00	10.58	10.80	10.90	9.20

Source: MF

Note: * all expenditures of the government, of municipalities and self-governing regions, including private sources of regional schooling; expenditures of private higher education institutions are not included (they are not available)

The total public expenditure on education in Slovakia is very low, deeply below the EU average. According to the latest, harmonised data (Eurostat, date of extraction: 1st May 2009) it was 3.79 % in 2006, compared to 5.02 % in EU27; annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student compared to the GDP per capita was 19.6, in contrast to 25.4 for EU27. In the ISCED 1 segment it was 17.9, compared to 20.8 for EU27. In the ISCED 2-4 segment it was 16.4, which was the second lowest, compared to 25.8 for EU27, and in the ISCED 5-6 level it was 33.6, compared to 38.1 for EU27. The following table offers a comparison of expenditures on general and vocational education and training.

Table 8: Total public expenditure on education in Slovakia by programme orientation in 2005

ISCED 2, 3, 4, 5B			ISCED 2, 3, 4 general			ISCED 2, 3, 4, 5B (pre)vocational		
million EUR PPS	% of GDP	% of TPE	million EUR PPS	% of GDP	% of TPE	million EUR PPS	% of GDP	% of TPE
1 375.7	1.9	4.9	844.5	1.2	3.0	531.1	0.7	1.9

Source: Eurostat

Notes: PPS - Purchase parity standard; TPE - total public expenditure

Although the secondary VET stream is much larger in number of students than the general one, total expenditures on general and vocational education and training are the reverse, as the ISCED 2 stream is - with marginal exceptions - only general. Furthermore, secondary vocational data are biased due to unavailable and not included expenditures of VET covered by the own income of the VET schools. This refers in particular to former secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*) that were financed from public funding in substantially lesser level, as they operate within the financial frame of the so-called contributory organisation, which means that these organisations are expected to co-finance their expenditures from their own productive work.

It is again worth stressing that in comparison of total public expenditures on ISCED 2-4 level Slovakia with its related GDP (1.9 %) is behind the EU25 (2.3 %). Several comparisons with the EU average indicate the lagging behind in investment in education. All this was in contrast with the priority declared by several governments to support investment in education in Slovakia. Although the Stability Programme of the Slovak Republic for 2008-2012 adopted by the government on 29th April 2009 also declared education and the knowledge society among priorities, the indicated increase of future expenditures is dominantly based on increased drawing from EU structural funds. No obligatory improvements from public budgets are envisaged which would compensate long-term underfinancing. The only substantial exception is the increase of salaries of pedagogical staff in regional schooling by 10.5 % in aggregate planned for 2009.

Nevertheless, also within this document expenditures on education were again identified as sensitive to population ageing, and the estimation of a 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 population decrease will not be translated into an increase of per capita funding and subsequently into improvement of an educational environment damaged in the dry years of economy and not improved in the short period of solid growth. Very likely, a continuation of the insufficient investment in human resources from public budgets has to be expected, due to the ongoing economic crisis.

1.4 Educational attainment of population

Although Slovakia is among the EU leaders in the share of ISCED 3+ educated, the high share of ISCED 3C and the low share of ISCED 4+ levels identified by 2001 census (see the diagram of population in Slovakia (age 25+) by level of education in the [annex](#)) indicated future risks for the implementation of a knowledge economy. In addition, only the Bratislava region was significantly better off according to the latest census.

Table 9: Highest achieved education level of 25+ aged in Slovakia and the Bratislava Region (%)

	ISCED 1+2	ISCED 3C	ISCED 3A-general	ISCED 3A-vocational	ISCED 4, 5, 6	ISCED 0	No response
Slovakia	24.65	32.17	4.60	24.07	12.36	0.36	1.79
Bratislava	14.97	25.08	6.59	25.45	25.74	0.11	2.06

Source: Statistical Office (ŠÚ, *Štatistický úrad*), Census 2001

Meanwhile a strong increase in enrolment in higher education (see Table 11 below) can be observed, and a substantial improvement concerning ISCED 4+ levels within the diagram mentioned above is expected within the 2011 census. A favourable low share of the ISCED 0-2 educated population is confirmed by the low share of early school leavers aged 18-24, with 7.2 % in 2007 according to Eurostat LFS data), which is significantly below EU27 data (14.8 %), however slightly increasing. Although the youth education attainment level is among the best in Europe, with 91.3 % of the population aged 20-24 having completed at least upper secondary education (in contrast to EU27 78.1 %) in 2007, a downward trend is visible e.g. in comparison with 94.8 % in 2000. Females' figures are better than those of males, within a two percentage point difference over a long time period.

The following table indicates the lagging behind of Slovakia in the share of tertiary educated people.

Table 10: Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 by ISCED level in 2007

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU 25 (%)	29	47	23
Slovakia (%)	11	75	14
Slovakia (absolute numbers in 1000s)	328	2 259	437

Source: Eurostat, LFS

With a decreasing population number, the share of enrolment in tertiary education however increased. The share of secondary school graduates continuing in higher education studies amounted to 49.8 % in the 2008/2009 academic year according to the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*).

Table 11: Number of newly enrolled students in selected academic years

Academic year	Full-time	Part-time	Newly enrolled total
2005/2006	36 196	21 295	57 491
2006/2007	37 753	24 510	62 263
2007/2008	37 503	21 306	58 809
2008/2009	34 673	20 662	55 335

Source: ÚIPŠ

After years of increase of newly enrolled students also in absolute numbers, the 2007/2008 decrease down to 58 809 was caused by the regulation of numbers of part-time students introduced by the amendment of the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*). The Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) argued that part-time studies are of lower quality, and the high numbers of students are accepted purely to raise the budget of higher education institutions.

Interestingly, the share of full-time students in higher education decreases with the share of vocational training within the secondary education of graduates entering tertiary education, i.e. from grammar schools (80.03 %) to secondary specialised schools (53.16 %) and secondary vocational schools (40.16 %), according to the ÚIPŠ data on students registered for the 2008/2009 academic year.

The following table refers to 10 years of development depicting important shifts in numbers of graduates. It indicates a huge decrease in ISCED 3 VET (with 2007/1998 Index 75.3 %) and an insignificant increase in tiny ISCED 4 VET accompanied by a boom in tertiary graduates growing from 17 442 in 1998 up to 46 379 in 2007 (with a remarkable 2007/1998 Growth Index of 267 %).

Table 12: Graduates in ISCED 3-6 by ISCED level and sex in Slovakia

	1998 by ISCED level			2004 by ISCED level			2006 by ISCED level			2007 by ISCED level		
	3VET	4VET	5+6									
All	78 604	1 591	17 442	59 953	2 540	35 371	60 329	2 792	40 190	59 198	2 438	46 379
M	41 673	467	7 555	31 755	1 044	15 332	32 535	1 710	16 278	31 471	1 421	17 744
F	36 931	1 124	9 887	28 198	1 496	20 039	27 794	1 082	23 912	27 727	1 017	28 635

Source: Eurostat

Note: 2002 data is excluded, as 2001 and 2002 data is biased by a reform of lower secondary study (gradual prolongation of basic school from 8 to 9 years in these years)

The share of Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) ISCED 5+6 fields graduates was 23.4 % of all graduates in 2007, slightly increasing from 21.1 % in 1998. In 2007 the number of ISCED 5+6 MST graduates per 1 000 people aged 20-29 was 11.9 compared to 4.3 in 1998, indicating a positive trend. Nevertheless, no quality of graduates is guaranteed within the current mass production, due to insufficient quality assurance. The decrease of the quality of graduates is stated as a consequence of schools fighting for high enrolment numbers rather than high graduate placements. Furthermore, a shift towards general studies instead of VET in secondary education and subsequent preference of humanities and social science is subject to criticism by employers. The Ministry of Education indicates support for universities of technology by permanent efforts to increase the per capita contributions (“normatives”) for technology field students more than the per capita normatives for humanities and social science students.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education, pushed by employers, is also positive towards interventions in the numbers and profiles of graduates, in particular to increase the number of ISCED 3C graduates lacking in the manufacturing sector and diverse crafts. An appropriate instrument in support of matching labour market needs should be developed by the impending establishment of sectoral and regional VET councils introduced by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave*) coming into force from 1st September 2009. However in neither of these cases is a common agreement and support for respective policies easy to achieve.

In contrast to initial education, with comparably positive statistical data meeting 2010 benchmarks, the LLL benchmark is far from being achieved. The adult participation in education and training was among the lowest in the EU, with a 3.9 % rate far below the EU27 average of 9.5 % in 2007, according to Eurostat LFS data covering the four week period prior to the survey. In 2008, it was even lower; only 3.3 % compared to a provisional 9.6 % in the EU27 and the 2010 benchmark of 12.5 %. A 2007 Adult Education Survey (AES) data indicating 44 % rate covering the 12 months prior to the survey (field work from August 2007 to September 2007) offers alternative, less dramatic data. The AES data seems to better correspond to reality, as compared to LFS. It is also better covering short training activities typical for the Slovak population with a high share of ISCED 3-6 qualified. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education declared the intention to support adult participation in LLL to achieve the 2010 benchmark within its Strategy on Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) and to achieve a 15 % rate in 2015.

Although, cooperation on the level of schools and other practitioners is considered to be both attractive for students and stimulating innovativeness in VET, VET to VET cooperation is verbally promoted rather than sufficiently supported. Data on participation rates in VET mobility programmes is not available. In general, however, participation in secondary VET mobility, as well as within tertiary students in Erasmus, is considered insufficient, hampered by the lack of co-financing from national/local resources and a limited knowledge of foreign languages. For details and some statistical data see part 2.2.

1.5 Definitions

National definitions and short explanations for respective terms titled in English and Slovak are offered here.

General education – všeobecné vzdelávanie

There are many scholarly definitions of general education, different in details, however typically stressing the forming of personality, its relations to the world - nature, society and to the self; and focusing dominantly on preparation for further study. Knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes are traditional outcomes-related categories, gradually complemented by “key competences” under the influence of European discourse.

In the Slovak language, it is necessary to distinguish between two very similar expressions. While “všeobecné vzdelávanie” refers to the process of education/learning, “všeobecné vzdelanie” refers to the results of the former. These results can be specified by respective formal levels. Levels of general education are specified by § 16 of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní*). No legislation specifies (defines) the two aforementioned terms corresponding to the term general education. It must be stressed that general education is also offered within vocational studies, however to a lesser extent. Thus, it is not possible to see general and vocational education as disjunctive. Of course, there are ISCED 3A study branches that are classified as general education programmes, and a grammar school is explicitly indicated by § 41 of the Education Act as a school offering general education.

Vocational and pre-vocational education – odborné a predodborné vzdelávanie

Slovak equivalents to the terms vocational education/vocational education and training are “odborné vzdelávanie/odborné vzdelávanie a príprava”. Similarly to the case of general education, as explained in the previous paragraph, the difference between “vzdelávanie” a “vzdelanie” must be taken into account.

Scholarly definitions are equivalent in content to Cedefop’s glossary formulation “to equip people with the knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations/labour market” with slight differences in particular with regard to using terms of outcomes-related categories. Knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes are traditional outcomes-related categories. (For further development see explanations concerning the term “competence” below.)

No legislation defines vocational education explicitly. Secondary vocational schools are explicitly indicated by § 42 of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. as schools offering education programmes lasting 2-5 years providing the “knowledge, skills and abilities” necessary for carrying out respective occupations and vocational activities. Levels of vocational education are also specified by § 16 of the Education Act. More explanations are offered by state educational programmes (corresponding to ISCED 2A, 2C, 3A, 3C, 4A, 5B vocational education) to set state requirements that are obligatory for schools while preparing their specific school educational programmes and by the “Manual for Creation of School Educational Programmes” (*Metodika tvorby školských vzdelávacích programov pre stredné odborné školy*).

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that secondary vocational studies are offered together with at least partly-provided general education. There are no formal VET studies shorter than 3 years in Slovakia except some rarely attended ISCED 2C studies aimed at low achievers. They offer so-called lower secondary vocational education (*nižšie stredné odborné vzdelanie*) preparing for very simple activities performed usually under supervision of other professionals. These studies lasting at least two years are classified and related data submitted for international use within UOE statistics as pre-vocational. There is however no widely used equivalent of the term pre-vocational education and there is no legislatively set pre-vocational education.

Technical education – technické vzdelávanie

Technical education is considered a specific case of vocational education related to diverse areas of technology (e.g. machinery, electrical engineering, etc. in contrast to others (e.g. services, business administration, etc.).

Tertiary and higher education – terciárne a vysokoškolské vzdelávanie

There are no explicit definitions of these terms commonly accepted or widely used. Higher education is pragmatically understood as education offered by higher education institutions.

Higher education is usually translated as “vysokoškolské vzdelávanie” or “vysokoškolské vzdelanie” (see explanation to twin words “vzdelávanie/vzdelanie” above), as visible e.g. in the translation of the term European Higher Education Area as “Európsky priestor vysokoškolského vzdelávania” within

Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. These terms are however not exact equivalents, as “vysokoškolské” relates explicitly to the higher education institutions, and the aforementioned act, if more precisely translated, should read as the Act on Higher Education Institutions. “Institutional” approach is strictly required by higher education institutions negatively perceiving the power of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV, *Slovenská akadémia vied*), long privileged by the state in funding research, and which was originally independent in offering PhD studies. Now, PhD titles are exclusively awarded by universities, however “non-higher education institutions”, e.g. the Slovak Academy of Sciences, if accredited for this and their experts approved by a respective university, can participate in the preparation of PhD students in cooperation with a respective university. A “non-institutional” equivalent of the term “higher education” is not used due to the aforementioned “institutional clash”, and additional explanations are used if misunderstanding occurs.

Furthermore, as a consequence of the reluctance of the university lobby to accept the emergence of expansion of secondary schools into tertiary education, there is an additional irregularity in terms necessary to be explained. Some secondary schools offer ISCED 5B studies classified as providing “higher professional education” according to § 16 of the Education Act, which even speaks about “post-secondary or tertiary education” as a consequence of the lobbying of secondary schools that developed experimental studies within the PHARE programme originally aimed at the provision of higher than secondary education and which was perceived by students and also teachers as a sort of higher education, e.g. as a consequence of an organisation of studies similar to universities. They were named higher professional schools (*vyššie odborné školy*) in common language, however legislatively not recognised as schools offering tertiary education. Currently this kind of institution does not exist any longer, although programmes of higher professional studies offering post-secondary education at secondary schools are recognised, while Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. even opens the door to offering tertiary education in the future.

Although originally the terms higher education and tertiary education were used interchangeably and considered equivalent, the aforementioned irregularities contributed to an understanding of “tertiary education” as a wider term and “higher education” as a specific case of tertiary education. However, no legislation defines tertiary education, and this term is not even used in the Act No 131/2002 Coll. As already indicated, the term tertiary education is used in the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (focusing on primary and secondary education) setting a compromise for secondary schools offering ISCED 5B higher professional education, which can award students with the newly introduced “Diploma Specialist” titles “DiS” and “DiS.art”, which however are not higher education titles.

Further education – *d’alšie vzdelávanie*

Further education was traditionally seen as education after finishing formal education or even after a break usually caused by employment. According to the Act on Further Education No. 386/1997 Coll. it is seen as “education which makes it possible for each individual to supplement, widen and deepen their education, to be retrained or to satisfy their interests”. Further education was seen as provided by institutions of further education offering also short-term programmes and programmes in various organisational forms, and also as education offered by regular schools including universities preparing participants (usually part-time students) to obtain the respective education level certificate (see also explanations concerning continuing education).

Continuing education – *d’alšie vzdelávanie, kontinuálne vzdelávanie*

Originally two terms - further education and continuing education were used interchangeably, usually referring to the “German or English” approach dominantly influencing the speaker or translator. The first Slovak term “d’alšie” was dominant in common language and also in legislation, while the second term is occurring more frequently in coincidence with recognition of the importance of permanent learning and lifelong learning. Gradually, continuing education is considered as general term and further education/training is more often used to describe just specific cases, predominantly meaning follow-up courses aimed at expanding/deepening professional skills. The term “kontinuálne vzdelávanie” has been recently applied to indicate changes in in-service training (replacing the term “d’alšie vzdelávanie”) introduced by the new act on pedagogical staff.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education – *postsekundárne neterciárne vzdelávanie*

Two forms of post-secondary non-tertiary education are recognised by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.:

- follow-up studies aimed at offering ISCED 3C graduates programmes to achieve ISCED 3A level in the same or similar branch of study;
- “post-maturita” studies are aimed at enhancing or deepening qualification and specified in types by the legislation: developing or innovative (refreshing) studies; qualifying studies in order to obtain vocational qualification in addition to a previous one.

It must be stated that there are also two additional types of “post-maturita” studies (higher professional study and specialising study offering knowledge and skills for specific working positions) which are seen as tertiary and corresponding to ISCED 5B, according to Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll.

Training – *odborná príprava, výcvik*

In Slovakia, training is seen as aimed at practical skills development. Significantly a Slovak equivalent “tréning” of that word is dominantly used with reference to preparation in sports. Gradually with opening to the world and practice from abroad it is together with the Slavic equivalent “výcvik” (and even substituting it) also used in wider sense, however still in cases dominantly focusing on improvement of already acquired skills (and not related to knowledge), *inter alia* in diverse in-company trainings. Furthermore, the word “training” is seen as stressing pragmatic English/American approach in contrast to a theoretically based one. Therefore, in a Slovak context, “training” is often considered equivalent to “education” and translated as “vzdelávanie”. On the other hand, in the phrase “vocational education and training” it is translated as “príprava” and “odborné vzdelávanie a príprava” in full, in line with translation of “vocational training” in the sense of training aimed at preparation for working as “odborná príprava”.

Initial vocational education and training – *počiatočné odborné vzdelávanie a príprava*

In Slovakia IVET is seen institutionally as initial education and training offered by secondary VET schools. As a consequence of width in coverage and volume of stream of secondary VET schools, the term is not widely used and it is also not defined by legislation.

Continuing vocational education and training – *kontinuálne (ďalšie) odborné vzdelávanie a príprava*

Continuing vocational education and training is seen as continuing education within VET. Gradually it is dominantly mentioned with regard to continuing professional development, e.g. in-service training of highly regulated professions such as teachers or medical staff, and with stress on training within retraining to meet job requirements. For some additional explanations see the paragraph above on “Continuing education”.

School-based programmes, *alternance training, apprenticeship*

Initial vocational education and training is school-based in Slovakia. Therefore there are just school-based programmes and therefore there is also no equivalent widely used in Slovak. It is similar with alternance training and therefore no Slovak equivalent was set. Furthermore, there is no traditional apprenticeship scheme in use anymore, and all participants are seen as pupils (students) according to legislation. The term apprentice is not recognised by legislation and the Slovak equivalent “učeň” is used in common language only or with regard to the former status in history. There is a possibility for companies to cofinance VET at secondary specialised (vocational) schools and also partly participate in the training of students who they are interested in as future employees. To distinguish between them and students not in preparation for the respective company, the former are sometimes called “apprentices”, regardless of the fact that legislation does not make such a differentiation.

Curriculum – *kurikulum*

This term was very rarely used in discourse till the 1990s, and if, then with regard to a description of situation in other countries. Instead of this, two crucial terms “učebné osnovy” (syllabi describing the content, which was set by the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) to be obligatorily taught in all subjects) and “učebný plán” (education plan setting the number of weekly hours for

respective studies) were used with regard to the programming phase of education, and the traditional term “vyučovanie” (classroom teaching - instruction) was used to refer to the delivery of education and learning provisions in class itself. Recently, after the curriculum decentralisation reform introduced by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. all aforementioned notions have remained in use, however syllabi are not central, but set by the respective schools, and the education plan is centrally set as a less detailed so-called framework education plan, leaving its finalisation up to school. The term “kurikulum” is not introduced by legislation and it is dominantly used in academic discourse in reference to educational programming. In the same sense it is also used within the “Manual for Creation of School Educational Programmes” offered for schools to help them develop their own curriculum (school educational programme). Nevertheless, the legislatively set terms “state educational programme” and “school educational programme” are used instead of “curriculum”, when meaning “curricular documents”.

Qualification – kvalifikácia

There is no explicit definition of the term “qualification” in the Slovak legislation. It is usually used in a common sense as the “ability to perform” relevant activities, or it is formally described as “a sum of requirements according to relevant legislative norms”. Within respective legislative norms the following pattern is used: Qualification is presented as the conjunction of

- achieved education (level);
- specific qualifying conditions, sometimes described as specific vocational capabilities;
- experience already gained in respective field;

of which only the first one, or the first two, or in some cases all three are required and must be justified in a way stipulated by law.

In the academic world qualification is considered as the set of abilities represented by knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits resulting in the capability (sometimes specified as competence) to perform a respective occupation. There is a difference between using the term “qualification” within science and legislation. Social science experts sometimes consider qualification as the automatic consequence of completed education and training. In the “Manual for Creation of School Educational Programmes” a difference is recognised for the first time by stating that graduates from VET schools receive their “first qualification”, leaving space for the further specification of requirements according to respective sectoral legislation or specific requirements targeted for working positions.

Skills and competences – zručnosti a kompetencie

There is no appropriate Slovak word equivalent for “skills” encompassing both mental skills and manual skills. The most used Slovak term “zručnosti” corresponds etymologically to manual skills, as it is derived from the word “hand” (“ruka”). As a consequence, there is the risk of misunderstanding of the term “zručnosti”. There are three ways visible in the academic discourse to overcome this.

- Some use the term “zručnosti” as the general term and add the explanatory adjective “mental” (“mentálne”) when it is important to indicate that manual skills are not meant. At the same time however, the term “mentálne zručnosti” is subject to criticism due to the inner inconsistency between “mentálne” and “zručnosti”, as the second word refers to the word “hand”.
- Some use the term “spôsobilosti” as the general equivalent to “skills” and “zručnosti” strictly in the sense of manual skills.
- Recently the term “spôsobilosti” (precisely identified, however ancient and forgotten in modern Slovak) was promoted as the general equivalent to “skills” by the terminological commission of the Ministry of Education.

In traditional as well as recent official curricular documents and also in mainstream discourse the term “zručnosti” was used as the equivalent of the term “skills”. In newly elaborated state curricular documents, “zručnosť” is seen as general term equivalent to “skill” and explained as the “ability to apply knowledge or use know-how”. In statements describing graduates’ profiles and standards skills (“what the pupil can do”) are contrasted to the knowledge (“what the pupil knows”).

The term “kompetencia” has two interrelated connotations: the first one being “entitlement to act” (e.g. by “competent officer” one means the “officer who is appointed to deal with respective agenda”, while

the quality of his/her skills to run agenda is not discussed); the second one is related to the “ability to perform”, which has already been demonstrated or which the speaker believes he/she possesses. The first connotation is much more used, but due to international influence this term is also gradually adopting new connotations.

The following is the definition of “kompetencia” according to the “Manual for Creation of School Educational Programmes”: Competence is a proved ability to use knowledge, skills, attitudes, value orientation and other capabilities in demonstrating and performing functions following the respective standards at work, at study in personal and professional development of the individual and in his/her active involvement in society, in his/her future success in working and non-working life and for his/her further education.

Schools were advised to identify the knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits (values) the graduate should possess and express them in terms of performance structured into three categories of competences. Thus a graduate’s profile, within each of the state curricula and consequently each school educational programme, is composed of key competences (6 overarching competences), general competences (reflecting results of general education) and vocational competences (reflecting occupational requirements).¹

¹ For further explanation see Skills and Competences Development and Innovative Pedagogy: Slovakia, Detailed Thematic Analysis Theme 7, chapter 0701.

2. Policy development – objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities

2.1 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

2.1.1 National LLL strategy

Academia Istropolitana, an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*), was appointed the task to elaborate background documents for a policy paper aimed at the further development of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance measures till 2015. The ESF project, the Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Life-long Learning in the SR for the Labour Market (*Tvorba, rozvoj a implementácia otvoreného systému celoživotného vzdelávania v SR pre potreby trhu práce*), was carried out within the Operational Programme Human Resources as fulfilment of this task. Subsequently, the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) was adopted by the government on 25th April 2007.

The aim of the strategy was to create a legislative background which will guarantee citizens access to obtaining new qualifications throughout their lives, to develop their key competences, and to actively participate in increasing their chances for employment. The policy declared elaboration of the following “components of the open system of LLL:

- System of monitoring and survey of the education needs with the aim of elaboration of their prognoses and information system on LLL;
- System of quality of lifelong learning with emphasis on the quality on non-formal education and informal learning;
- System of recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal education and informal learning for obtaining qualification – permeability;
- Supporting tools of financing of LLL”.

15 measures with deadlines were set, of which the following are worth stressing:

- LLL act was to have been elaborated by September 2007 (according to measure 8.2);
- identifying an institution responsible for managing integral system of LL guidance and establishing a working group of experts for setting quality standards for lifelong guidance (LLG), by July 2008 (8.5 and 8.6);
- establishing a national authority for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, by September 2008 (8.7);
- introducing the quality management system in LLL and LLG, by September 2008 (8.8);
- introducing monitoring and forecasting educational needs reflecting labour market needs, by 2009;
- establishing a national qualification system and national qualification framework, by 2009 in draft version (8.11).

The strategy again mentioned the introduction of financial tools for the development of LLL in measure 8.15, however without any concrete financial scheme proposal.

The Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was followed by the Action Plan for LLL Strategy Implementation (*Akčný plán na implementáciu Stratégie celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*), adopted by MŠ on 13th November 2007, based on Government Resolution No. 382/2007. The following priorities were reiterated:

- Quality assurance in non-formal education/learning;
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- LLL information system;
- LLL guidance system;
- LLL promotion.

The action plan specified 13 concrete measures to be implemented, of which

- three address the quality assurance of non-formal education/learning (institutions, training of managers and lecturers, accreditation of programmes);
- two refer to validation of non-formal and informal learning (establishment of national qualification system and national qualification framework compatible with EQF, establishment of the network of authorised institutions for validation);
- two refer to creation of an LLL information system (offering information on provision of education, monitoring labour market and anticipating learning needs);
- three refer to lifelong learning guidance - LLG (creation of database, improving training of counsellors, establishing an institution responsible for methodological support and coordination of activities within the LLG system);
- three refer to promotion of LLL (creation of standing expert group, organisation of promotional events and trainings, assisting regional partnerships for human resource development).

Each of these activities is presented in a unified format (objective, description, target group, identification of relevant priority, timeline - some were due by the end of 2008, measurable outputs/indicators, and responsible institutions). Implementation is hampered by pending legislation and the lack of agreement among stakeholders on relevant details of solutions.

In addition, the Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 (*Modernizačný program Slovensko 21*) was adopted by the government on 4th June 2008, complemented by Action Plans added in October 2008. Short-term and medium-term measures identified within the Action Plan Education should be interlinked with 2007-2013 ESF OP Education. Creating a system of lifelong learning is listed among measures introduced in this paper within the priority area Education. Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 is linked to the National Reform Programme of the SR for 2008-2010 (*Národný program reforiem SR na roky 2008-2010*), approved by Government Resolution No. 707/2008 on 8th October 2008, within which the implementation of LLL strategy is considered an instrument in the development of the knowledge society. Nevertheless, within action plans adopted together with the National Reform Programme and valid also for Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21, the most relevant support for LLL is visible within the Employment Action Plan in a link with the development of the national system of *flexicurity*, while within the Action Plan Education the creation of a career system in continuing professional development of pedagogical staff of regional schooling is stressed over general LLL topics. The LLL strategy is also reflected in the National Strategic Reference Framework of the SR for the period 2007-2013 (*Národný strategický referenčný rámec Slovenskej republiky na roky 2007-2013*).

The National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007-2013 and the operational programmes, including the LLL most relevant OP Education (*OP Vzdelávanie*) and OP Employment and Social Inclusion (*OP Zamestnanosť a sociálna inklúzia*), were adopted by the government on 6th December 2006 and subsequently approved by the European Commission (17th August 2007, 7th November 2007, 26th October 2007, respectively).

Regardless of all the policy papers stressing the importance of LLL, submission of the act on lifelong learning to the government (originally expected in 2007) was postponed to 2009, as higher priority has been given to the adoption of other legislation to be prepared by the Ministry of Education. Currently, a draft version of the act on LLL has been discussed with experts and some stakeholders, with as yet unclear results concerning the final wording. As a consequence many of the aforementioned measures due in 2008 and 2009 are pending.

2.1.2 Policy development in the main VET policy areas

Governance and funding

After years of concentrating on problems of higher education and lacking interest in regional schooling and in particular secondary VET, the Ministry of Education dramatically changed its stance and as a consequence two important legislative norms were launched substantially affecting IVET. The Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. valid from 1st September 2008 introduced curricular decentralisation, and first classes of secondary schools have since then been taught according to curricula elaborated

autonomously by the schools, while regional/local stakeholders have as well been explicitly invited to contribute to the adjustment of curricula.

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET in force since 1st September 2009 specifies in detail the rights of stakeholders. Regional/local employers are entitled to intervene into curriculum design and to require specified competences to be stressed within curriculum and achieved by graduates. Professional organisations are furthermore expected to assess quality of graduates and elaborate a “plan of labour market needs” for the subsequent five year period. Self-governing regions are responsible for creation of regional VET strategies in cooperation with social partners: regional educational authorities, job centres, trade unions and employers, including regional chambers of commerce and professional organisations.

This act, however, opens the door for the initiative of stakeholders rather than setting clearly defined mandatory duties. Furthermore, it sets out the options for intervention by stakeholders, however without securing stable financial conditions and know-how for system monitoring and anticipation of future needs. The act explicitly sets the creation of diverse advisory bodies. It envisages 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, and accordingly are called “four-partite”. Sectoral VET Councils are envisaged to serve as advisory bodies for sectoral professional organisations cooperating with respective ministries and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Nevertheless, the intention to create advisory bodies is just a first step. It must be complemented by the development of quality know-how in support of evidence-based policy making.

Financing VET shall be supported by tax incentives for employers contributing to the modernisation of school equipment, in particular in practical training, and co-financing the VET of learners designated as their future employees. The act also sets a VET Development Fund headed by the Minister of Education collecting voluntary contributions from non-state subjects. With respect to financing the act is quite disappointing. Instead of a “train or pay” principle and levy based obligatory funding, a voluntary funding was agreed, which makes the Fund vulnerable to illiquidity. Even worse, the current scheme of 2 % corporate tax to be allocated to schools and other organisations based on the free decision of tax payers is to be weakened and gradually abolished, according to Ministry of Finance recommendations. Schools that have established good contacts with enterprises and other donors consider the new regulation as endangering their incomes in favour of the controversially perceived Fund. In contrast to this, the opportunity to classify some costs of training and a motivation stipend (up to 65 % of minimum subsistence cost set by the relevant act of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family for learners identified as future employees) as tax deductible items for the contributing future employer are seen positively. Nevertheless this currently involves marginal numbers of students amid the increasing amount of unemployed caused by the crisis; no dramatic increase in the number of students contracted by employers is expected.

Guidance and counselling

Two new education-sector legislative norms are hoped to strengthen interlinking among the relevant players. Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. explicitly speaks about the system of guidance and stresses importance of interlinking activities of respective institutions. Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. makes self-governing regions responsible for the provision of information to centres of educational and psychological counselling and prevention in order to inform students, parents and other interested parties about labour market needs and VET provision at schools.

The National Forum on Lifelong Guidance (*Národné fórum pre celoživotné poradenstvo*) was established in 2008 similarly as other EU countries. It is expected that this forum will advise government concerning policy in this area. As this body is affiliated to the Ministry of Education and composed predominantly of high ranking officials, experts in the field were invited to form expert bodies affiliated to the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (*Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie*).

Improving career guidance is also perceived as necessary in the labour sector. The policy paper “The Employment Strategy (Predicting Labour Market Needs and Skills)” submitted to the government in August 2008 indicates efforts to cooperate with the Ministry of Education on measures already set by Strategy in Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance. Despite positive signals of interest in cross-sectoral cooperation, there are some risks of fragmentation visible. Failure to contribute to the elaboration of know-how fundamentals in forecasting/anticipating labour market needs within the

previous programming period ESF – SOP Human resources and SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, where both ministries cooperated institutionally in programme management, might negatively influence the current period of programming, as both ministries at present run their own operational programmes independently.

Teacher and trainer training

There are two important impulses worth mentioning. As a consequence of the curricular reform introduced by the Education Act, teachers and trainers in IVET became more involved in curriculum development. Subsequently massive training aimed at designing curricular documents was launched, supported by ESF. ESF projects were used for training pedagogical staff to adjust to new school-leaving exams at both general and VET ISCED 3A studies² implemented in 2005 to 2008. Within the 2007-2013 programming period, the following national projects have been launched:

- Primary school teacher training in the area of foreign languages with regard to the foreign-language teaching concept in primary and secondary schools;
- Continuing primary and secondary teacher training in informatics;
- Modernisation of the education process in basic (primary and lower secondary) schools;
- Modernisation of the education process in secondary schools;
- Teacher training with regard to developing school education programmes;
- Developing a new education programme in vocational training for the needs of the automotive industry II;
- Kindergarten pedagogic staff training as part of education reform.

Complementary to national projects that should have a strong systemic impact nation-wide, there are many demand-driven projects with impact, directly or indirectly, on improvement of staff skills within Priority Axis 1, Reform of the education and vocational training system and Priority Axis 4, Modern education for a knowledge-based society for the Bratislava Region. Concrete data about the respective measures and calls are available in the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programme Education for January – December 2008.

The Concept Paper for the Professional Development of Teachers in a Career System (*Koncepcia profesijného rozvoja učiteľov v kariérovom systéme*) was adopted by the government on 18th April 2007 introducing a credit system based continuing professional development scheme.

The Act on Pedagogical Staff in force since November 2009 set six categories of pedagogical staff: teacher; trainer; tutor; pedagogical assistant; foreign lecturer; trainer of sport school or sport class. A new category – “*répétiteur*”, specific for conservatories, was added by the parliament. The act further indicates specialisation options within 4 levels career paths (see also part 6.1.3) for pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff. The reform envisages setting standards for the respective categories of staff and specialisations. First proposals of standards for some categories and specialisations have already been proposed and are discussed among the community. Two points are subjects of criticism - Credit gathering resulting in awards and better remuneration do not reflect earlier activities, and all staff regardless of age and experience should start from scratch. Furthermore, chasing after credits, regardless of the real value they offer, might harm the quality of class lessons, as regular quality teaching will not pay well compared to undertaking diverse out of class activities.

Curriculum reform and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment

Decentralisation of the curriculum development, introduced from September 2008 in the first classes of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, allows for increasing the impact of local policies and respective schools professionalism. Nevertheless, this reform introduced by Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. cannot automatically improve innovativeness in teaching and/or assessment. It is hoped that together with the Act on Pedagogical Staff motivating teachers and trainers and also other staff to credit gathering in exchange of promotion, innovative activities will become more frequent as well as visible for dissemination. Of course, such schemes alone cannot guarantee quality or prevent self justifying behaviour just to satisfy some formal criteria. It is not yet clear how accreditation will work

² See Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, Part 0601 - Types of teachers and trainers in VET.

and whether individual needs of trainees or, in contrast, a supply-driven approach conforming with training providers will dominate.

Within ESF Measure 1.1 Transformation of traditional school into a modern one and complementary within Measure 4.1 – Transformation of traditional school into a modern one for the Bratislava Region, the door is opened for funding “innovation of methods and forms of teaching” as declared in programming documents and monitoring reports. First calls were launched in 2008, and it is not yet possible to assess the results.

Future practice alone will show to what extent innovative activities will take place. Instruments in support are available.

Skills needs strategy

The new Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. for the first time explicitly sets responsibility towards identification of labour market needs. Self-governing regions have to prepare regional strategies in cooperation with Regional VET Councils composed of relevant stakeholders. Labour market needs should be materialised into a “plan of labour market learning needs” elaborated by professional organisations of employers and submitted to the Regional VET Council and the national VET Council for commenting, with a final decision by the self-governing region. Unfortunately, exact numbers of graduates of the respective study and training programmes are to be set as a consequence of § 5 (4). Although it is not clear how the respective data will be decided on, there is a serious risk of very strict regulations based on the lobbyism of employers, as there is a lack of experience with anticipation of skill needs. It is a pity that the know-how for forecasting/anticipating skill needs was not developed within the 2004-2007 ESF programming period, despite original intentions³. There is a risk that the years of graduate supply produced with a disregard for labour market needs, which was caused by the defective practice in the way schools were financed, will be replaced by a turbulent period of conflicts between employers’ requirements to satisfy their business plans and students/parents expectations about the future. Methodological assistance for self-governing regions is very urgent, in order to support evidence-based policy making and prevent the replacing of the current one-sided policy by a new one.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The first precondition for validation of non-formal and informal learning is to achieve agreement among stakeholders on the relevant know-how. There is however only limited experience gathered, usually within European projects and as a consequence of amendment of the Trade Licensing Act, to enable skilled, however not formally qualified, people to start their businesses⁴. Currently this interim period continues and no action in support of validation of non-formal and informal learning is planned from the national level before adoption of the LLL act. This act, to be submitted by the end of 2009 to the government and already under discussion among experts, should introduce for the first time “partial qualification” and provide for conditions and an institutional infrastructure for validation. No ESF projects are planned to be launched before the legislation is prepared, according to the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, this could result in a lack of the quality know-how necessary to be introduced into practice, or in the delay in introduction of the appropriate know-how after the LLL act comes into force.

2.1.3 Current debates

Typically the hottest debates refer to already adopted policies. In contrast to the period between 2002 and 2006, when secondary VET was not among legislative priorities, in 2006 to 2008 hasty development took place and reforming laws were speedily adopted. The Ministry of Education itself highlights that it is time to slow down, to settle reforms and rethink corrections if needed. Here are some major topics of dispute:

³ See Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, Part 0701 - Mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs.

⁴ Further details are available in Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, Theme 8 - Accumulating, accrediting and validating learning.

- According to criticism, the decentralisation reform does not create conditions for a real reform of curricula; it just shifts responsibility for curriculum development to schools without creating the material conditions for the change: There is a lack of textbooks, diverse teaching aids and predominantly digital learning materials. In contrast to this, the Ministry stresses the importance of opening a window for those ready for change and the opportunity of funding changes from the ESF.
- According to criticism, the VET governing reform does not make it clear enough how to achieve the declared goals of linking VET and the labour market. Creation of advisory bodies and inviting employers to influence VET is positive; however without real expertise in policy-making it might be useless or result in other forms of malpractice. Changes in financing VET are considered insufficient. In contrast to this, the Ministry believes that the current situation of dramatic mismatch between graduates' supply and demand required immediate intervention, and opening a legislative window for the cooperation of stakeholders was an inevitable precondition for any further progress.
- According to criticism, the new continuing professional development model is at risk of failure, making collection of credits more important than delivery of quality education and creating a market for training providers rather than for satisfaction of the learning needs of pedagogical staff. In contrast to this, the Ministry believes that it is too early for this kind of criticism and that it will be possible to prevent this kind of failures. It however admitted that the reform might be endangered by a lack of resources for bonuses for staff progressing in their career paths.

Schools and their staff face a lot of challenges caused by reforms (including new administrative burden) and in contrast to recent years, debates on the philosophy of change are gradually being replaced by practical ones. Nevertheless, the missing period for preparing for changes (e.g. no piloting) will remain a subject of debate and criticism. Very likely, promoters of an incremental approach in reforming will gain support from the pedagogical community over promoters of fundamental reforms.

The last reforming legislation act on LLL was postponed due to two reasons - preoccupation of the pedagogical community with digesting the new, changes already introduced from 2008, and the unclear position of the Ministry in some LLL-relevant crucial points. Nevertheless, the following issues are already on the table:

- how to prevent the erosion of a formal system after introducing the recognition of prior learning in non-formal and informal settings, and how to develop the appropriate know-how for assessment;
- how to achieve an overarching approach and prevent further fragmentation in VET in respective sectors without conflicts among stakeholders;
- how to improve accreditation of CVET/LLL and replace current input accreditation by output accreditation.

One of the crucial points is however insufficiently targeted: How to provide inhabitants with quality information and how to secure the right for assessment of acquired competences regardless of ways/settings leading to their acquirement.

2.2 The latest developments in the field of European tools

Implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) corresponding to EQF

A proposal to implement EQF in the Slovak Republic (*Návrh implementácie Európskeho kvalifikačného rámca pre celoživotné vzdelávanie v podmienkach Slovenskej republiky*) was approved by Government Resolution No. 105/2009 of 4th February 2009. According to this proposal a National System of Qualifications (NSQ) is defined as a publicly accessible registry of all full and partial qualifications validated and recognised in the territory of the Slovak Republic. 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 (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) based on the stipulation of Act No. 139/2008 Coll. amending Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. A Memorandum on Cooperation between the ministries of education and labour should facilitate the coordination of elaboration of NSO and NSQ. The 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.

For the first time it is officially declared that the 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.

The final versions of descriptors of respective NQF levels are to be agreed in 2009. It is already 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 or even the 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.

Descriptions of graduates' profiles of existing programmes should comply with NQF descriptors by the end of 2011, and therefore all study programmes of primary, secondary and tertiary schools as well as educational activities of CVET and adult education should be linked to respective levels of NQF by the end of 2011.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning EQF is reflected by 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, without, however, clear indication of the responsibility to assure this. This seems to indicate that implementation of NQF will in the first wave affect only the education sector and then 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.

Two ESF national projects to co-finance these policies are agreed to be launched. An ESF Operational Programme Education project, the "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. An ESF Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion project, the "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 of NSO and facilitate the adjustment of VET to employers' requirements. A revision of national statistical classification is envisaged, resulting in the alignment of NSO with ISCO 08.

Quality assurance

There has been no national quality assurance scheme developed so far, and European activities related to CQAF and EQARF are insufficiently reflected due to the lack of institutional support and also the lack of specialists. Slovakia did not even manage to fully participate in ENQA-VET.

There are only two activities partly relevant.

According to 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 (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva SR č. 9/2006 Z. z. o štruktúre a obsahu správ o výchovno-vzdelávacej činnosti, jej výsledkoch a podmienkach škôl a školských zariadení*) schools are expected to pay special attention to self-evaluation.

A new national project No. 1/2009 "External Evaluation of School Quality Facilitating Self-Evaluation Processes and School Development" (*Externé hodnotenie kvality školy podporujúce sebahodnotiace procesy a rozvoj školy*) has been launched under the Operational Programme Education to develop instruments of quality evaluation and self-evaluation of schools and school establishments, including their implementation.

It is worth stressing that in contrast to the earlier ESF programming period, quality management is addressed extensively in the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme Education. The non-existence of a national quality management system was expressed as 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. Hopefully, the aforementioned national project indicates a turning point.

Nevertheless, the role of quality assurance mechanisms/provisions in developing the National Qualification Framework is still underestimated. In the current phase of development a shift to learning outcomes and agreement of descriptors is dominant in debates among practitioners and policy makers. Within the current phase of curricular reform, descriptions of graduates' profiles and identification of relevant knowledge, skills and competences dominate over quality assurance mechanism development. Currently, the strengthening involvement of additional players (including local and regional players and employers) is debated more than the efficiency of instruments.

Mobility within the education system

Currently, the national qualification system in Slovakia is still structured predominantly in a traditional way, as corresponding

- to respective study/training branches within the education sector; and
- to specific requirements usually set by a respective sectoral Ministry decree with regard to sectoral qualifications.

Qualification is rarely decomposed into a set of units or credits, although an increase of modularisation of traditional IVET studies is expected in the future, similarly to the development in CVET.

There has been no specific instrument developed or specific institution involved so far in monitoring accumulation of learning outcomes and facilitating the transfer within the education system. It is up to a school director to set transfer conditions, e. g. what kind of exam is required to continue studies or to obtain a qualification. There have so far been no partial qualifications recognised and registered. Nevertheless, individual schools can offer studies of individual curricula subjects followed by individual subject exams and eventually by a final exam leading to ISCED 3C Certificate of Apprenticeships or an ISCED 3A "maturita" school-leaving certificate.

In practice there is a difference between qualification according to education sector legislation and entitlement to run a small business requiring a qualification. In order not to hamper skilled although not (formally) qualified workers to conduct business, the Slovak Chamber of Craftsmen is authorised to organise qualifying exams in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior regional authority. Exam content must correspond to the respective VET practical study curriculum. Successful applicants receive a certificate on passing the exam and certification of professional competence for running the respective small business (trade). This is regulated by Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. (*Živnostenský zákon č. 455/1991 Zb.*) and the subsequent Ministry of Interior Decree No. 323/2001 Coll. specifying the details on required knowledge and skills, examining and certifying.

Although transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes is not yet officially recognised by legislation in the aforementioned terms, in practice modularisation, and learning outcomes or competences-based assessment are in slight progress. A systemic change is expected by the Ministry of Education from the Act on LLL, which will allow partial qualification as a regular part of National Qualification System and from redesigning current NSQ by two ESF national projects on the National System of Qualifications and National System of Occupations.

Implementing a unit-based credit system

Implementing a unit-based credit system in VET is typical for continuing professional development systems, rather than for obtaining an initial qualification. In addition to the health sector, where credit systems are widely used, a credit system will have to be newly launched in in-service training of pedagogical staff.

In draft versions of the Act on LLL, credit systems were proposed as an option for obtaining qualifications as a consequence of recognition of competences acquired within non-formal and informal learning. Nevertheless, two important preconditions for successful implementation have so far not been met. Recognition and validation know-how is not yet available, and the institutionalisation of respective procedures has not yet been clarified. Criticism of formal educational institutions is not effectively addressed and their positive participation in validation of non-formal and informal learning is not yet secured.

Geographical mobility in VET

Short-term mobility affects about 1 400 students annually according to Eurostat data, while an additional 200-300 students are getting grants, according to the estimation of National Agency of LLLP.

In the area of VET there are about 1 200 pupils and 90 young workers taking part per year in the placement activity under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The numbers of students independently sent for placement abroad by their home schools are not known. Placements for 936 secondary school students and 79 individuals on the labour market, plus 183 mobilities of professionals, took place within the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme in 2008.

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 2007 Eurostat “Mobility of students in Europe” data. In contrast to the aforementioned 10.2 % outflow, 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 plan to send for study and placements 2 153 students, 681 teachers and 130 other higher education staff, which represents a significant increase compared to the previous year. The exact number of students and teachers selected for Erasmus programme support is not yet available.

Mobility in VET is still considered by schools as a sort of benefit for students and an opportunity to make training more attractive for them, rather than as a regular effort to support plurality and specialisation in training. Assessment and validation in a mobility context is organised according to agreed practice among the participating institutions. There is no specific regulation on the assessment of skills and competences acquired during mobility experience or concerning certification. Europass is however well known by schools and used in a way agreed among partners.

There were 1 020 Europass - Mobility documents issued in 2008. The following table offers the distribution according to organisational framework.

Table 13: Number of Europass - Mobility documents issued by organisational framework

Leonardo da Vinci	747
Erasmus	198
Comenius	14
Grundtvig	1
Youth	21
Other EC funded actions	139
Total	1 020

Source: National Europass Centre

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, participation in secondary VET mobility is hampered by a lack of co-financing from national/local sources and limited knowledge of foreign languages. Thus, interested students from poor families and with poor language proficiency are disadvantaged.

2.3 Possible projections of the financial crisis on VET policies

2.3.1 The foreseen consequences of the crisis on VET

The volume of Gross Domestic Product in the first quarter of 2009 decreased in constant prices by 5.6 % compared to the first quarter of 2008, according the Statistical Office (ŠÚ, *Štatistický úrad*); undoubtedly also affected by the two-week cut in gas supplies from Russia and not just by the crisis. In the second quarter of 2009 it decreased only by 5.3 %.

Total employment reached 2 388 200 in the first and 2 378 500 in the second quarter of 2009 (decreasing only by 0.1 % and 1.1 % on the annual basis, respectively). Although no hard impact of financial crisis was expected on Slovakia in autumn 2008 by analysts, the economic slowdown was evident in both foreign and domestic demand in early 2009 as a consequence of the global economic crisis and the heavy dependence of Slovak industry on foreign demand.

Over the 2009 first quarter, compared to the corresponding period in 2008, the industrial production index (IPI) decreased by 22.9 %, in manufacturing by 25.7 %. Production decreased the most in the manufacture of:

- electrical equipment by 44.9 %;
- transport equipment by 40.9 %;
- basic metal and fabricated metal products except machinery and equipment by 29.8 %;

- chemicals and chemical products by 29.3 %;
- rubber and plastic products and other non-metallic mineral products by 27.2 %;
- machinery and equipment n.e.c. by 24.1 %;
- textiles, apparel, leather and related products by 23.7 %.

Slovakia is affected by the global recession as a consequence of the high share of the industry, in particular the automotive industry, in GDP. The automotive industry, employing about 74 000 people, contributed to about one third of total industrial output last year.

There are three carmakers currently operating in Slovakia: Kia Motors, PSA Peugeot Citroen and Volkswagen Slovakia. While the first two produce small and mid-range cars, Volkswagen produces Touareg, Audi Q7, Škoda Octavia – large cars for which demand decreased sharply, more than for the former two carmakers' products. A car-scraping bonus scheme was introduced by the government to offset the drop in retail sales.

The Slovak economic sentiment indicator continued to decrease in spring with 66.3 percentage points in May 2009 representing the lowest level since the beginning of measuring in January 1997. The negative development of the indicator was affected by a decrease in confidence in services, construction and industry, according to the Statistical Office.

No economic crisis impact on VET is however visible so far. With regard to IVET, the Slovak school-based system is less vulnerable to the economic results of businesses. Nevertheless, a huge decrease in tax and levy income of the state will affect budgets in schools in autumn 2009, as the government has not yet adapted the originally approved state budget. Changes are expected after reviewing macroeconomic data and new economic prognoses of the Ministry of Finance (MF, *Ministerstvo financií*) expected in September 2009 and resulting in state budget corrections. So far, the crisis has not affected either the VET schools or the interest of pupils in study in training branches. This may however change next year, and an even stronger trend to a shift towards general education and a lack of interest in ISCED 3C training might be observed. Currently, ISCED 3C related occupations in the automotive industry and electrical devices industry are the most vulnerable, as Slovakia is the world's strongest car and LCD panel exporter. Without revival in foreign markets no vacancies and subsequently no interest in graduates can be expected. On the contrary, both industrial sectors indicate dismissals.

Businesses recently learnt how difficult it was to find skilled workers and therefore they were not quick as regards dismissals of employees. They applied the so-called flexi-accounts, the scheme permitting employees to receive a full wage while not working and then to make up the hours later as overtime work. They also preferred reducing working hours and wages over firing workers who might not be anymore available after a revival. Finally, however, waves of dismissals arrived and the numbers of registered unemployed according to the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, *Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) jumped to 336 926 registered in May 2009, in contrast to 222 260 in May 2008, including also workers returning from other EU countries.

Businesses and schools also learnt to cooperate in a period of shortage of workers, and practical training improved during the last few years in branches where companies offered new equipment and technologies for training. Centres of VET are to be established in all regions according to the new Act on VET, based on regional policy papers of VET development. In contrast to earlier acknowledgements of Ministry of Education efforts to adopt, for the first time in history, a law focusing on VET, businesses are rather silent now. Apparently, for more active engagement of employers in this process, in particular during the progressing crisis, interventions would be welcomed to motivate employers to get involved in IVET and formal CVET. Nevertheless, the Košice Region indicates positive progress in creation of centres.

A longer period of crisis can however lead to a downturn. The willingness of companies to offer workplace training for VET learners from secondary and tertiary schools, to contribute to the equipment of centres of VET as well as offer CVET opportunities for their own employers might change despite initial intentions.

2.3.2 The measures already taken or envisaged to be taken as response to the crisis

No measures have been taken towards the public vocational education and training system. Any future measures will depend on expected cuts in the state budget which will be taken after the Ministry of Finance revision of the 2009 budget and the 2010 budget proposal in autumn 2009.

As the government declared fighting against the rising unemployment its most important goal, specific measures to address this are in preparation:

Within the new ESF programming period 2007-2013 the National Project “100” focuses on support for citizens at risk of mass dismissal as a consequence of the global financial crisis. The project is implemented in all regions except the Bratislava Region. It includes two activities: Activity 1 “Guidance and support for employees at risk of job loss as a result of the global financial crisis”, and Activity 2 “Training of citizens at risk of mass dismissal as a consequence of the global financial crisis”. Within the second activity 1 980 people are scheduled to be trained between 30th January 2009 and 31st January 2011. Activities will focus on

- support for education and training of the target group tailored according to the specific requirements and needs of potential employers, or current employers in case of changes in their production schedule or implementation of new technologies;
- support for targeted training focused on self-employment;
- support for training focused on development of key skills.

The national project will be managed by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, with a total budget of EUR 3 319 391.89. Training will be delivered by external providers contracted by labour offices.

5 000 new tertiary students including PhD students are to be accepted above already announced numbers of new entrants, according to the declaration of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education. This means that those higher education institutions accepting more students will receive additional funding (per capita contributions from the state budget) within their contract with the Ministry of Education. Reactions are mixed; some criticism addresses the risk of decreased quality, but some schools have already announced their positive stance. The government asked schools for support in order to prevent secondary school graduates from unemployment, as they are highly at risk under current conditions (see section 1.3, part Employment and unemployment). The response of schools will not be clear before the start of the new academic year in mid-September.

There are no new measures currently intended to stimulate VET for adults except the aforementioned people at risk of mass dismissal. Additional means were however allocated for ESF national projects IIIA and XI (see part 9.3) already developed in the earlier programming period with prolonged drawing till 31st May 2009, in order to improve the skills of the unemployed and those already employed.

More intensive application of active labour market policy is envisaged by the amendment of the act of employment services. Act No. 49/2009 Coll. amending Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (*Zákon č. 5/2004 Z. z. o službách zamestnanosti*), valid since March 2009, introduces new measures focused on reducing the consequences of the crisis. The measures include contributions supporting:

- retaining employment;
- creation of new job;
- employee's wage;
- self-employment;
- self-employment in agricultural product processing and trade.

Improvement is also expected from better counselling of the unemployed and from stronger support, including financial, for starting their own businesses.

State aid was given to important employers, e.g. Volkswagen, in support of retaining employment and aids to attract new investors (e.g. an LCD panel producer from Taiwan) are under negotiation. A universal measure to remit levies for up to 60 days to companies retaining employment is available as a consequence of amendment No. 49/2009 Coll. indicated above.

3. Legislative and institutional framework – provision of learning opportunities

3.1 Legislative framework for IVET

According to Article 42(2) of the Constitution of SR (*Ústava SR*), citizens have the right to free primary and secondary education, including secondary VET schools and if possible (“depending on the potential of the society”) also tertiary education. Non-state (non-public) schools are entitled by the Constitution to collect tuition fees.

The most fundamental laws regulating IVET:

- Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (Education Act) (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*) in force since 1st September 2008, last amended by Act No. 184/2009 Coll. This act defined fundamentals of regional schooling. This means the segment of the education system composed in particular of primary and secondary schools and diverse establishments, considered “non schools” from the legislative point of view, offering services for the education sector or offering education and training. Centres of practical training and centres of vocational practice are the most relevant VET “establishments” (they are not “schools” according to legislation, despite the fact that they offer VET). In contrast to earlier legislation two changes affecting the VET system are crucial:
 - Two original streams of VET schools⁵, secondary vocational schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*) and secondary specialised schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*) were merged into one. Thus, all VET schools are now categorised as secondary specialised schools.
 - Stipulation of levels of education is much more detailed and aligned explicitly to ISCED levels.

A set of decrees and other bylaws is affiliated to this act. The most important decrees are as follows:

- Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 318/2008 Coll. on Completion of Study at Secondary Schools (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č.318/2008 Z. z. o ukončovaní štúdia na stredných školách*);
- Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 314/2008 Coll. on Secondary Schools and on the List of Study Branches and Training Branches Requiring Verification of Special Abilities, Skills or Talent (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 314/2008 Z. z. o stredných školách a o zozname študijných odborov a učebných odborov, v ktorých sa vyžaduje overenie špeciálnych schopností, zručností alebo nadania*);
- Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 326/2008 Coll. on Types and Appropriate Characteristics of Certificates and Other Documents including the Ways of their Registration and Storage (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č.326/2008 Z. z. o druhoch a náležitostiach vysvedčení a ostatných školských tlačív vrátane spôsobov ich evidencie a uloženia*);
- Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 325/2008 Coll. on School Facilities of Guidance and Prevention (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č.325/2008 Z. z. o školských zariadeniach výchovného poradenstva a prevencie*).
- Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave*). This act supplements the Education Act by new governance of VET allowing for direct intervention of non-educational stakeholders, in particular employers represented by professional associations and chambers, into IVET. A dominant part of the act is devoted to the stipulation of VET Fund related details perceived quite controversially (see part 9.4).
- Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government (*Zákon č. 596/2003 Z. z. o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej samospráve*) last amended by Acts No. 245/2008, No. 179/2009 and No. 184/2009. This act regulates in detail the procedure of establishing schools and school establishments, the status of their managers, the management of schools by local/regional and national authorities (state, public, self-governing, including specific self-governing bodies in schools and regions), the supervision of schools and school establishments,

⁵ See Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, Part 0401 - Background to the IVET.

etc. This act has been substantially amended and complemented by the new view on VET governance introduced by the Act on VET.

- Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Establishments (*Zákon č. 597/2003 Z. z. o financování základních škol, středních škol a školských zariadení*), most recently amended by Acts No. 245/2008, No. 179/2009 and No. 184/2009; This law and respective bylaws specify financing of schools and school establishments on a per capita principle (see part 9.1). From January 2004 all primary and secondary schools receive equal per capita funding from the state budget regardless of their status in order to encourage the establishment of non-state schools. Since 2009 non-state establishments specified by Act No. 179/2009 Coll. are guaranteed at least 88 % of their per capita funding from the budget of the self-governing region (and in fact from income tax centrally collected and subsequently distributed).
- Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*), most recently amended by Act No. 462/2008 Coll. This law with its respective bylaws is fundamental for tertiary education. It also regulates the financing aspects. Tertiary education is free of charge in public universities; however it is possible to collect fees in private universities and since 2008 also for part-time studies at public universities. All public higher education institutions were universities *lege artis*. This should be changed according to the ongoing process of comprehensive accreditation leading to categorisation of HEI into research and education oriented (universities) and HEI focusing on education (higher education institutions and professional higher education institutions).

3.2 Institutional framework: IVET

Central government

After the chain of changes in responsibility towards IVET since 1989, the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) became the single national level authority essentially responsible for IVET in the early 2000s. The ministry was responsible for the elaboration of all education policies making use of the services of directly managed institutions. From September 2008, a partial decentralisation in curriculum development was introduced and from September 2009 some aspects of the decentralisation in VET governance are to be introduced. Furthermore, although other ministries played a limited role in support of specific secondary VET schools within their professional scope (health, police, fire-fighting) since the entry into force of the Act on VET in September 2009, sectoral ministries will have more to say on VET on a national level within the Council of the Government for VET (further as National VET Council). It is believed that the National VET Council together with other Regional VET Councils (see later) and Sectoral VET Councils will improve the alignment of VET to the labour market. Sectoral VET Councils are to be established by professional associations/chambers in cooperation with respective sectoral ministry and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*).

The most important institutions directly managed by the Ministry of Education are as follows:

- The National Institute for Education (ŠPÚ, *Štátny pedagogický ústav*) – support for general education curriculum development, including general subjects of VET schools; responsibility for elaboration of national level framework curricular documents (so-called state educational programmes);
- The National Institute of Certified Measurement (NÚCEM, *Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní*) – responsibility for national student assessment programmes (in 9th and 13th year of study) and diverse international programmes (e.g. PISA, TALIS, SITES, etc.);
- The State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV, *Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*) – assistance in development of VET curriculum, responsibility for elaboration of national level framework curricular documents (so-called state educational programmes);
- The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) - collecting information including UOE harmonised statistics in education, analytical studies;
- The Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (VÚDPaP, *Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie*) - psychological aspects of child and youth development, gradually focusing more on career guidance and counselling;

- Methodological and Pedagogical Centre (MPC, *metodicko-pedagogické centrum*) – responsible for the provision of in-service training for teachers and trainers with regional subsidiaries that have lost their legal entity since 1st January 2008.
- The State School Inspection agency (ŠŠI, *Štátna školská inšpekcia*) - a state administration body headed by the Chief School Inspector appointed for a five-year period by the Minister of Education. By law the State School Inspection is independent in its performance of school inspection, which is based on the annual plan and results in the annual report on the status of education and upbringing.

Regional/local government

Slovakia underwent the process of decentralisation, with regional parliaments and heads of 8 self-governing regions elected for the first time in December 2001 for four-year terms. Responsibility for the establishment of schools was transferred to the self-governing bodies on 1st July 2002. A new system of self-governing offices and sectoral state administration offices was established on 1st January 2004, and fiscal decentralisation came into force on 1st January 2005. The responsibility for primary schools and other establishments of local importance was transferred to municipalities, and the responsibility for secondary schools and other establishments of regional importance to self-governing regions. Schools which are of trans-regional importance, e.g. bilingual schools established under international agreements or special schools for pupils with special education needs, have remained under the responsibility of the state administration. Hence, the local/regional educational authority is currently of two types:

- the state administration, based on eight regional school offices;
- the self-governing administration, with offices of municipalities and eight offices of self-governing regions located in the same cities as the eight state administration regional school offices.

The first level of the state administration agenda in education is covered by school directors who are appointed for five-year terms; a school director selection process is obligatory every five years.

Before establishing or cancelling an education institution, a municipality/self-governing region is obliged to ask the MŠ to register/de-register the institution. Without this registration/de-registration, the municipality and/or self-governing region cannot act. The law also requires a statement from the municipal school board or territorial school board concerning the intentions of the municipality or self-governing region.

Although unofficially the freedom to finalise the curricula was given to schools (10 % of the weekly instruction hours and 30 % of its content could be adjusted according to local/regional needs) curriculum development remained centralised until the entry into force of the new Education Act. Till September 2008 the Ministry of Education approved all curricula (the so-called basic pedagogical documents (*základné pedagogické dokumenty*); in the case of VET finalised under the supervision of sectoral expert commissions affiliated to ŠIOV). Since September 2008 schools make use of their own, autonomously developed educational programmes based on by MŠ approved state educational programmes (developed by ŠIOV and ŠPÚ). The MŠ provides for textbooks for free according to a specific list. Other textbooks recommended by the MŠ can also be used.

Since 2009, with the entering into force of the Act on VET, involvement of other players has been made possible within newly created Regional VET Councils composed of representatives of state, self-government, employers and employees. In particular, the involvement of employers in VET is to be strengthened. Employers can participate in elaborating IVET graduates' profiles and setting requirements for knowledge, skills, abilities and working habits. They can also facilitate practical training and provide for equipment and materials. In contrast to employers mentioned above acting in relation to respective schools and school curricula, employer associations or professional associations are also expected to act in a more general level, e.g. contribute to elaboration of graduates' profiles in the state curricula, contribute to the development of textbooks and provide other teaching aids. They are in fact the most powerful body in preparing background documents, in particular VET regional strategies for the decision-making of regional self-governing authorities. They became more influential in quality checking as they delegated their representatives to examination commissions for school-leaving exams. It is of particular importance that they should elaborate plans for labour market needs in terms of estimated number of graduates in respective study and training branches for the following five years. This is an extraordinarily powerful tool for the assertion of employers' stances, which is expected to change the networks of schools and programmes in order to adjust them to employers' needs. Nevertheless, regional human resource development is at risk of being subordinated to the employers' planning (see also part 4.3).

Since many players were invited to influence VET in secondary schools without taking responsibility for the results and without any obligatory contribution to the improvement of VET itself, some secondary school managements are looking carefully for further development at the regional level.

It will take time to settle the governance reform currently underway, indicated above. The practice will also show to what extent decentralisation will really take place, as the government still has strong control over the VET system by different tools than up to 2008. The situation in the decision-making (policy and legislative) level and the implementation in respective segments till 2008, which is the last year of governance dominated by the Ministry of Education, is described below.

Sharing responsibility in decision-making and implementation

In the case of lower secondary education (marginal with regard to VET), upper secondary education and post-secondary non tertiary education, as well as a single alternative IVET pathway (ISCED 2C training), the body at the decision-making level, in both policy and legislation, is the Ministry of Education. Self-governing bodies play some limited role in policies (in particular with regard to networks of schools and programmes), within strong governmental regulation however, in particular due to centrally controlled fiscal policy. Responsible bodies for implementing policy at the micro-level are school directors. There is a duality at the mezzo-level, as responsibility is shared by school founders (predominantly self-governing regions) and regional state administration (regional school offices).

There is no genuine apprenticeship scheme in VET in Slovakia, only a very marginal number of students are trained for companies, with their training co-financed by companies. A window for the stronger participation of companies will be opened by the entry into force of the Act on VET, as this act makes tax deductible some costs of the training and affiliated services of companies. Regional centres of VET leading, well-equipped institutions providing for training of students, in-service training and regional information service are to be established under support of employers.

Although regional schools are also legal entities, higher education institutions' autonomy is much stronger. The Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing legislation, but there are few policies developed purely on the central level, as there are two strong players representing higher education institutions recognised by law: the Slovak Rectors' Conference (SRK, *Slovenská rektorská konferencia*) and the Higher Education Council (RVŠ, *Rada vysokých škôl*). 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 elected 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 the financing scheme and by regulating the inflow of funding for research activities. Recently, the Ministry of Education voiced the intention to support cooperation of universities with businesses, e.g. to create common companies making use of university assets and respective company assets.

There are also diverse activities within non-formal youth programmes contributing to the development of vocational skills of youth regulated by Act No. 282/2008 Coll. on Support of Working with Youth (*Zákon č. 282/2008 Z. z. o podpore práce s mládežou*), and implemented by institutions of the education sector and also by non-state organisations, but their activities do not focus on the provision of training to obtain qualification.

Role of social partners

A Tripartite Act No. 103/2007 Coll. (*Zákon č. 103/2007 Z. z. o trojstranných konzultáciách na celoštátnej úrovni a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (zákon o tripartite)*) re-established a consulting and concerting body, the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic (HSR, *Hospodárska a sociálna rada Slovenskej republiky*). (See also the paragraph on "Social partnership" in part 3.4.)

The Council discusses all policy papers and legislation before submitting them to the meeting of the government. Nevertheless, it has little influence on IVET delivery. Although social partners could have participated in decision-making processes in curriculum development, education standards establishment and in qualification exams, their role in VET has been primarily that of advisors to the state administration. With the introduction of a curricular reform since 1st September 2008 and with the subsequent new Act on VET coming in force in 2009, social dialogue might be significantly improved and the influence of social partners increased.

3.3 Legislative framework for CVET

Legislation

The CVET relevant legislation is very fragmented and there is no single fundamental law on CVET. The Act on LLL to be discussed by parliament in December 2009 should play such a fundamental role, provided it aligns CVET/LLL to the National System of Qualifications and identifies tools supporting CVET/LLL in all settings. This act is expected to replace the currently valid Further Education Act, which contributed to the support of CVET/LLL, although it failed to play a fundamental role due to its dominantly declaratory character.

The most relevant legislation regulating CVET/adult learning/LLL:

- Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (*Zákon č. 386/1997 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní*), last amended by Act No. 365/2004 Coll., contains classification of institutions providing CVET, training activities, accreditation and certification rules. It also identifies sources of financing CVET, however only in a declaratory form, without any measures to provide for mandatory public or private financing CVET;
- Act No. 311/2001 Coll. of the Labour Code (*Zákon č. 311/2001 Z. z. Zákonník práce*), last amended by Act No. 49/2009 Coll., regulates employers' and employees' responsibilities for upgrading skills. However, no obligatory measures are set in support of CVET⁶;
- Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing (the "Trades Licensing Act"), last amended by Act No. 448/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 455/1991 Zb. o živnostenskom podnikaní (živnostenský zákon)*) regulates trades. It indirectly stipulates that the provision of continuing training is a free trade, i.e. no professional qualification is requested when registering (unless the trade is explicitly listed in the law and the qualification of trader explicitly required).

Although the following act is aimed at regulation of regional initial education, it also affects LLL as it regulates state language schools accepting also adults and sets levels of language proficiency corresponding to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages. Furthermore, it regulates part-time studies at secondary schools.

- Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (Education Act) (*Zákon č. 245/2008. Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*) adopted by the parliament on 22nd May 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 and abolishing Act No. 29/1984 Coll. (*Zákon č. 29/1984 Zb. o sústave základných a stredných škôl (školský zákon)*).

Similarly, the following act regulating tertiary education contains parts that regulate part-time studies.

- Act No. 131/2001 Coll. on Higher Education (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*), last amended by Act No. 282/2008 Coll.

Establishment of private CVET providers can be based on the following acts:

- Act No. 513/1991 Coll. Trade Code (*Zákon č. 513/1991 Zb. Obchodný zákonník*), as amended;
- Act No. 34/2002 Coll. on Foundations (*Zákon č. 34/2002 Z. z. o nadáciách*);
- Act No. 83/1990 Coll. on Associations of Citizens (*Zákon č. 83/1990 Zb. o združovaní občanov*), as amended; and
- Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing as amended (*Zákon č. 455/1991 Zb. o živnostenskom podnikaní v znení neskorších predpisov*).

Furthermore, there are four fundamental laws stipulating qualification requirements and/or the responsibility of employers to improve qualification of employees:

- Act No. 312/2001 Coll. with regard to state service (*Zákon č. 312/2001 Z. z. o štátnej službe*);
- Act No. 553/2003 Coll. with regard to public service (*Zákon č. 553/2003 Z. z. o odmeňovaní niektorých zamestnancov pri výkone práce vo verejnom záujme a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov*);
- Act No. 311/2001 Coll. of the Labour Code, already mentioned above;
- Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing (the "Trades Licensing Act"), already mentioned above.

⁶ See also Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, part 0504 - CVET at the initiative of enterprises or social partners.

The full list of all legislative norms of the education sector, containing dozens of decrees and other regulations is available in Slovak at www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=2791 and in English partly within the Slovak education system description in Eurybase at

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/SK_EN.pdf

A new Act on Pedagogical Staff replacing the existing decree and fully renewing provisions for continuing professional development of pedagogical staff was adopted by parliament on 24th June 2009 and will come in force in November 2009.

In addition to the aforementioned norms there are many sectoral legislative norms stipulating in detail qualifications (vocational capabilities) for specific professions, e.g.

- Act No. 315/2001 Coll. on Fire Fighting and Rescue Corps (*Zákon č. 315/2001 Z. z. o Hasičskom a záchrannom zbore*) as amended by Act No. 82/2009 Coll. or Decree of the Ministry of Interior SR No. 121/2002 Coll. on Fire Prevention (*Vyhláška Ministerstva vnútra č. 121/2002 Z. z. o požiarnej prevencii*) as amended by Decree No. 591/2005 Coll.; or
- Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 322/2006 Coll. concerning further training of healthcare workers (*Nariadenie vlády č. 322/2006 Z.z. o spôsobe ďalšieho vzdelávania zdravotníckych pracovníkov, sústave špecializovaných odborov a sústave certifikovaných pracovných činností*), as amended by regulation No. 478/2007 Coll.;
- Act No. 541/2004 Coll. on Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy (Atomic Act), last amended by Act No. 408/2008 Coll. (*Zákon o mierovom využívaní jadrovej energie (Atómový zákon)*) regulating conditions of use of nuclear energy and also professional competency of staff (§ 24) and further detailed by Decree of the Nuclear Regulatory Authority of the SR No. 52/2006 Coll. on Professional Competency (*Vyhláška Úradu jadrového dozoru SR č. 52/2006 Z. z. o odbornej spôsobilosti*).

Labour market training is regulated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) by

- Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (*Zákon č. 5/2004 Z. z. o službách zamestnanosti*), later amended by Act No. 108/2009 Coll. It identifies respective tools of active labour market policy (§§ 49-61), provision of training of job seekers and employees in need of increasing their employability (§§ 44-48).

A specific case is

- Act No. 124/2006 Coll. on Occupational Safety and Health Protection, last amended by Act No. 140/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 124/2006 Z. z. o bezpečnosti a ochrane zdravia pri práci*), as this act regulates obligatory training of employees provided by each employer.

3.4 Institutional framework: CVET

Central government

The Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) is responsible for legislation for CVET, however, there are no clear borders between responsibilities of the MŠ focusing on “further” education and other governmental institutions engaged in lifelong learning, in particular the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) with responsibility for labour market training.

MŠ has one directly managed institution *Academia Istropolitana* (www.acadistr.sk) with a mission in this field. *Academia Istropolitana* is an education and training provider, and at the same time it develops draft policy papers and proposals of measures concerning CVET and lifelong learning. It was appointed to carry out the ESF project “Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic for the Labour Market”, one result of which was the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) adopted by the government on 25th April 2007.

The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva* www.uips.sk) also serves MŠ, e.g. by provision of statistics or specific research studies, if required by MŠ; This institute maintains a list of CVET providers stemming from the registry of the Ministry of Interior (MV, *Ministerstvo vnútra*) and publishes offers for further education of pedagogical staff.

Other ministries have also specific institutions taking care of further training in the sector, among which the most important is the Institute for Public Administration (IVS, *Inštitút pre verejnú správu*, www.ivs.sk), offering professional training for officers at all levels of government, including self-

governing bodies. This institute, similarly to other sector institutes, also offers expert consultancy to respective ministries. Within the Ministry of Health (MZ, *Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*) sector, even the institution providing professional training and LLL for doctors and health care personnel was transformed into a state university, the Slovak Medical University, established in 2002.

MPSVR is responsible for the funding and organisation of labour market training. Labour market training together with other employment services are provided through the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, *Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*, www.upsvar.sk), the network of offices of labour, social affairs and family, and detached branch offices, all headed by the Central Office.

The Institute for Labour and Family Research (IVPR, *Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny*, www.sspr.gov.sk) originated from the merging of diverse independent institutions under MPSVR. In contrast to the former labour market research institute from the 1980s and 1990s it has only limited research capacities. The Social Policy Institute (ISP, *Inštitút sociálnej politiky*) set up in 2004 by MPSVR in support of policy making in the social sector, was abolished in 2007, and its activities are to be covered by the Section of Social and Family Policies of MPSVR.

The Employment Institute (IZ, *Inštitút zamestnanosti*, www.iz.sk) is a non-governmental non-profit organisation created in 2004 focused on labour market analyses and provision of data for political discourse and policy making.

The Social Development Fund (FSR, *Fond sociálneho rozvoja*, www.fsr.gov.sk) has been created to assist and promote regional and local partnerships and financing bottom up driven projects supporting groups at risk of social exclusion. FSR serves as the national support structure for EQUAL, and since 2007 it has been launching calls, as the ESF intermediary body under the managing authority, to fight against poverty and social exclusion.

The Social Implementation Agency (SIA, *Sociálna implementačná agentúra*, www.sia.gov.sk) was set up by the MPSVR on 29th December 2006 to implement the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programme “Employment and Social inclusion”.

An important lobbyist in CVET is the Slovak Association of Adult Education Institutions (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR*, www.aivd.sk), in practice however, large enterprises and/or associations in branch industries are much stronger in negotiating with the government.

Regional/local government

Regional partnerships are promoted by the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government in April 2007. In contrast to IVET, where the new governance architecture is described by the Act on VET that came in force in September 2009, changes affecting CVET/LLL are not expected until 2010 with the replacement of Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (*Zákon č. 386/1997 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní a o zmene zákona Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky č. 387/1996 Z. z. o zamestnanosti*) by the newly elaborated act on LLL. Nevertheless, it is expected that the role of self-governing regions will be strengthened and activities already launched within ESF Learning Region projects⁷ promoted more within the 2007-2013 ESF programming period. Furthermore, with the increasing involvement of employers in programming IVET, higher interest in CVET can be expected. The same applies to regional IVET strategies and regional VET councils and sectoral VET councils. It can be hoped that with their IVET related activities the door for expansion into CVET will appear, as strong interrelation between IVET and CVET cannot be ignored. Currently there are no inter-sectoral bodies explicitly focusing on CVET, although there are some activities already indicating the importance of the overarching approach:

- The Memorandum of Cooperation between the MŠ and MPSVR should facilitate elaboration of the National System of Occupations (NSO) interlinked with the National System of Qualifications (NSQ). Further expansion of cooperation can be expected, as an overarching NSQ linked to EQF cannot be established without multi-sectoral cooperation;
- The National Forum of Lifelong Guidance established within the European Union initiative is an example of understanding the importance of overcoming sectoral fragmentations; in the case of improved interrelation between lifelong guidance and LLL/CVET provision, the further expansion of multi-sectoral cooperation in LLL/CVET can be expected.

⁷ See VET Policy Report: Slovak Republic 2008: Progress in Policy Priority Areas for Vocational Education and Training, example of policy measures in part 6.4.2.

Social partnership

In Slovakia, social partnership was introduced in the early 1990s; however the social dialogue was interrupted in 1997 and legislation even withdrawn in 2004⁸. The new Tripartite Act No. 103/2007 Coll. established a new consulting and concerting body, the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic (HSR, *Hospodárska a sociálna rada Slovenskej republiky*). The Council consists of 21 members equally representing three partners with seven seats each. Trade unions are represented by seven representatives of the Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ, *Konfederácia odborových zväzov*) and employers' representatives are composed of four representatives of the National Union of Employers (RÚZ, *Republiková únia zamestnávateľov*), two of the Federation of the Employers' Association of Slovakia (AZZZ, *Asociácia zamestnávateľských zväzov a združení Slovenskej republiky*) and one of the Association on Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia (ZMOS, *Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska*). RÚZ is a member of UNICE.

The Council concertes standpoints and recommendations and makes agreements (e.g. general agreements and diverse social agreement on employment, productivity, wages, etc.) in the field of economic and employment development, and it concertes standpoints and recommendations in the field of the state budget, and concertes standpoints on relevant legislation set by § 4 of the Tripartite Act.

Social dialogue at the highest level could result in a General Agreement (*Generálna dohoda*) between social partners (which however happened most recently in 2000). On the branch level, social dialogue is carried out through collective bargaining. The partners for collective bargaining on this level are the respective employers' organisations and respective union bodies, and it results in a collective agreement at the master agreement level (*kolektívna zmluva vyššieho stupňa*). According to Act No. 2/1991 Coll. on Collective Bargaining (*Zákon č. 2/1991 Zb. o kolektívnom vyjednávaní*), last amended by Act No. 555/2007 Coll., the results of collective bargaining are binding, which is a permanent source of criticism by employers. The government returned to the earlier practice cancelled by the previous government in order to satisfy trade unions. Some businesses see it as unfair that the results of bargaining are also valid for subjects not participating in the negotiation, as the extension of results is based purely on belonging to a respective sector of the economy, disregarding the real needs of employers and employees of particular businesses.

Nevertheless, the collective bargaining just very rarely addresses VET and as a rule, provision of CVET is not a subject at the master agreement level, and agreements do not go beyond the stipulations of the aforementioned Act No. 311/2001 Coll. of the Labour Code.

⁸ See Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008.

4. Initial vocational education and training

4.1 Background to the initial vocational education and training system

Compulsory education lasts 10 years and this usually means nine years of basic school and at least one year of secondary school. Such a construction is intended as in-built driver to prevent leaving education early. Although there is neither education level nor classification recognised in reference to the completion of compulsory education according to legislation, it is implicitly expected that mainstream students achieve at least the ISCED 3C education level. Basic school is composed of two stages, the first lasting four years and the second five years; ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 levels also correspond to the respective levels of education according to national legislation. Thus, drop-outs from basic schools are easier to classify. Since 2008, the system of education levels (see the table below) has been refined in order to better diversify among the results of education. The lower secondary vocational level is newly introduced for low achievers originally having troubles achieving a Certificate of Apprenticeship corresponding to ISCED 3C level. In contrast to ISCED no specific level is recognised within the national classification that corresponds to ISCED 4. All ISCED 3A and 4 programmes' graduates are labelled as full secondary education graduates, making a difference only between VET and general education.

Table 14: Categorisation of education levels since the 2008/2009 school year

Education levels according to Act No. 245/2008 Coll.			Type of study at school - ISCED*
Overarching	General stream	VET stream	
Pre-primary	Pre-primary		Kindergarten – ISCED 0
Basic	Primary		1st stage of basic school – ISCED 1
	Lower secondary		2 nd stage of basic school – ISCED 2
Secondary		Lower secondary vocational education (lower secondary)	Secondary specialised (vocational) school, 2-year programme with a final exam, extraordinarily with a Certificate of Apprenticeship – ISCED 2C
		Secondary vocational education (secondary)	Secondary specialised (vocational) school, 3 to 4-year programme with a final exam (usually also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship) – ISCED 3C
		Full secondary general education (upper secondary)	Grammar school 4 to 8-year programme with a “maturita” school-leaving certificate – ISCED 3A
		Full secondary vocational education (upper secondary)	Secondary specialised (vocational) school 4 to 5-year programme with a “maturita” school-leaving certificate (in some cases also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship) – ISCED 3A
			Conservatory after 4 th year – ISCED 3A
			Secondary specialised (vocational) school follow-up study (usually 2 years) for ISCED 3C secondary vocational education graduates; completed by a “maturita” school-leaving exam – ISCED 3A
			Secondary specialised (vocational) school “post-maturita” developing and refresher study (at least 6 months) completed by a final exam – ISCED 4A
		Secondary specialised (vocational) school “post-maturita” qualifying study (at least 2 years) completed by 2 nd “maturita” school-leaving exam – ISCED 4A	

Higher professional		Higher professional education (post-secondary or tertiary)	Secondary specialised (vocational) school “post-maturita” specialising study completed by “absolutorium” – ISCED 5B
			Secondary specialised (vocational) school higher professional study (2 to 3 years) with “absolutorium” Conservatory after 6 th year – ISCED 5B

Notes: * ISCED levels correspond to classification used to feed UOE statistics

In the first column overarching terms traditionally used are presented. In the second column levels offered within general education and in the third column levels offered in VET are presented. In the fourth column ISCED classification and study programmes with indication of respective schools depicted in the diagram of the education system are presented.

The most visible change in the diagram in comparison to the situation till 2008 is that one stream of secondary VET, the so-called secondary vocational schools, disappeared. From September 2008, there are only two secondary streams. The general education stream is represented by grammar schools (G, *gymnázia*) and VET stream by secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredné odborné školy*). In practice it means that all secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilištia*) were renamed as secondary specialised schools. Secondary vocational schools were originally established to offer education for skilled workers and predominantly ISCED 3C programmes, finishing with a Certificate of Apprenticeship in contrast to secondary specialised schools offering ISCED 3A programmes finishing with the “maturita” school-leaving certificate. The gradual development led to a dramatic increase of ISCED 3A programmes offered by secondary vocational schools and to a non-transparent system of VET schools with increasing share of associated (*združené*) and joined (*spojené*) schools. Thus legislation reflected the reducing of the differences between the two kinds of schools.

As a consequence of this change basic school leavers can decide to continue at grammar school or at secondary specialised school. A further minor change affects schools of arts, which were originally subsumed under secondary specialised schools and now are in a somehow different position. Their curricula activities are backed by the National Institute of Education (ŠPÚ, *Štátny pedagogický ústav*) and not anymore by the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV, *Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*), and schools of arts, in particular conservatories, are often explicitly named in parallel to the category of secondary specialised schools. For the purpose of this report, however, we will not indicate this kind of autonomy of schools of arts, as they still are seen as a VET system component.

Education system, education pathways and respective certificates

Education system description

Kindergarten

Kindergarten (MŠ, *materská škola*) provides pre-school education for children aged 2-6 and prepares them for compulsory school attendance. Due to the population decline, there was a competition for children, which encouraged staff to think of how to attract as many children as possible; as a consequence, in the 1990s they were considered the most innovative segment among formal education institutions. Many kindergartens were closed and their facilities reprofiled or sold. Currently there is a lack of places in kindergartens as a consequence of the increasing number of newly born children since 2003, and children below 3 years have almost no chance to be placed.

Basic school

Basic school (ZŠ, *základná škola*) is composed of primary and lower secondary level education. Many schools in rural areas provide primary level education only (30 % of the population is situated in villages with less than 2 000 inhabitants). Children enter basic school aged 6. Instruction is provided by primary level class teachers and typically by teachers with a double specialisation (e.g. Mathematics and Physics) at the lower secondary level. Technical education is provided one hour per week within the mainstream lower secondary level children and is the first specialised VET subject.

A three-year long gradual expansion of basic school from eight to nine years was decided by the government in 1996. Since the 1999/2000 school year, all students leave basic school after completion of the 9th grade, except for those who transfer to long-form grammar schools after the 5th grade, or low achievers. The latter leave after 10 years of compulsory education, including the repeating of some grades, before completing their 9th grade. After the completion of basic school, students, typically aged 15, start to attend secondary school.

Upper secondary education

Traditionally there were three streams of upper secondary education: general academic provided by grammar schools (G, *gymnázium*); and two vocational streams provided by secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*) and secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*). Merging of schools of these streams became necessary as a consequence of the severe decline of demand in the early 2000s. Associated secondary schools (ZSŠ, *združená stredná škola*) and joined schools (SŠ, *spojená škola*) emerged officially, being recognised in law, in order to stimulate the smooth merging of schools. To prevent non-transparency, all VET schools regardless of their original title and profile, are named SOŠ according to the new Education Act in force since September 2008.

After the completion of basic school, students, typically at the age of 15, make their choice of secondary school. As the minimum length of compulsory education is fixed at 10 years, students participate in at least one year of upper secondary schooling. The end of compulsory education is not certified, it is expected that everyone, except for extremely low achievers, will finish at least a 3-year ISCED 3C level education to obtain a certificate of completion of secondary vocational education (*stredné odborné vzdelanie*). Those VET students who finish 4 or 5-year ISCED 3A courses with an upper secondary “maturita” school-leaving certificate (*maturitné vysvedčenie*) are considered to have achieved “complete secondary vocational education” (*úplné stredné odborné vzdelanie*). These terms often lead to confusion in international comparisons, as students who do not achieve complete secondary vocational education (ISCED 3A) might have completed secondary vocational education (ISCED 3C). Therefore ISCED 3A level is preferably named “full secondary education” in this report.

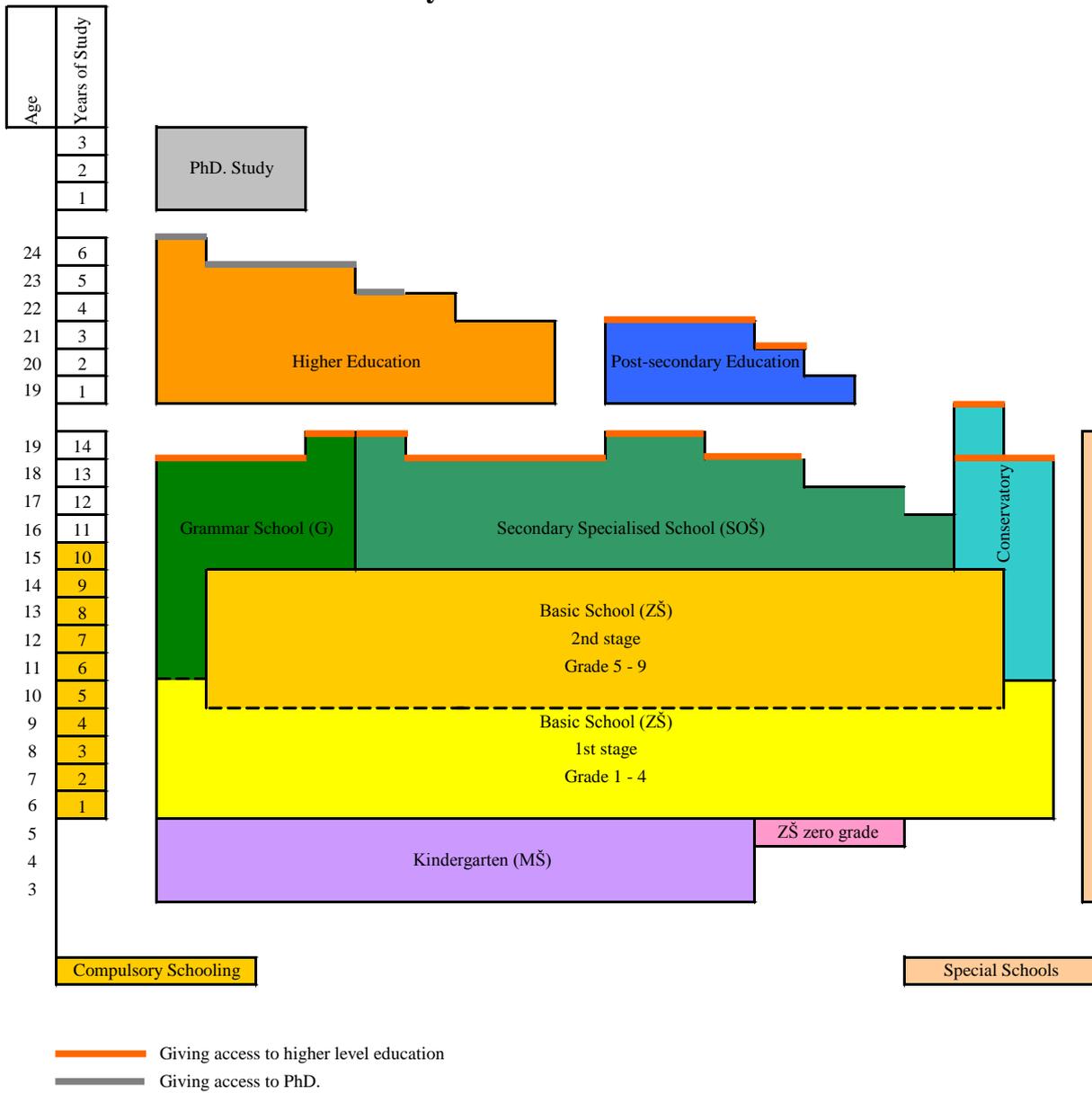
Grammar school is the alternative to VET schools. It is a very demanding general educational institution aimed at deepening the students’ theoretical knowledge and academic skills, and considered the best preparatory programme for university studies. The course of study, lasting 4-8 years, ends with a “maturita” school-leaving examination (*maturitná skúška*) which is an obligatory precondition for admission into higher education. Standard courses of study last for 4 years. The bilingual version (with English, German, French, Spanish or Italian as a complementary language of instruction) lasts 5 years. The so-called long form of G study (originally for pupils completing Grade 4 or exceptionally Grade 5 of ZŠ, since 2008/2009 just for those completing Grade 5) lasts 8 years. It was originally aimed at pupils considered exceptionally academically gifted. Currently it predominantly attracts parents who expect a better academic environment and/or prefer bypassing the secondary school admission procedure after the completion of basic school. In 2008/2009, 26.7 % of all graduates graduated from the long form of G, in contrast to the originally projected 5 %.

Other establishments

The formal education system is completed by a set of specialised facilities providing assistance to schools, parents and students (e.g. school service centres, school catering facilities, school clubs, centres of leisure, school centres of interest, in-country schools, pedagogical and psychological counselling centres) and offering additional specialised education (e.g. language schools, etc.). Basic schools of arts are state subsidised institutions offering paid education (with minimal fees) in music, dance, fine arts, and drama for gifted and/or motivated children and adults.

Centres of practical training (*strediská praktického vyučovania*) provide practical training for students who receive theoretical education at SOŠ (former SOU) without the full option of school-based practical training.

Education System in Slovakia in 2008/2009



The following table offers the number of institutions delivering education by ownership in time series indicating a decrease in numbers of state/public schools and increasing numbers in private and church-affiliated schools.

Table 15: Number of active secondary institutions* in five consecutive school years

Type of school		Number of schools				
		2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Grammar schools	State/public	158	161	160	162	162
	Private	19	22	24	30	35
	Church affiliated	46	51	54	54	55
Secondary specialised schools	State/public	238 + (2)	216 + (1)	196 + (1)	189 + (2)	171+ (2)
	Private	32 + (4)	35 + (4)	38 + (4)	46 + (4)	57 + (4)
	Church affiliated	11	14	14	16	16
Secondary vocational schools	State/public	193	155	135	135	115
	Private	15 + (1)	26	23	20	21
	Church-affiliated	5	5	5	4	4
Associated secondary schools	State/public	88 + (1)	105	119	122	130
	Private	1	3	5	6	6
	Church-affiliated	0	1	2	1	1
Vocational schools**	State/public	54	47	46	50	40
	Private	0	0	1	1	1
	Church-affiliated	0	0	0	0	0
Centres of practical training	State/public	27	10	10	10	9
	Private	6	19	19	23	22
	Church-affiliated	0	0	0	0	0
Schools and centres total	State/public	758	695	667	670	629
	Private	73	109	114	130	146
	Church-affiliated	62	71	75	75	76
Total		893	875	856	875	851

Source: ÚIPS

Notes: * Secondary schools, vocational schools and centres of practical training; schools offering only part-time studies are in brackets

** Vocational schools (*učilištia*) - affiliated with SOU

*** Centres of practical training (SPV, *strediská praktického vyučovania*)

The table above also indicates an increase in private and church-affiliated schools supported by per capita financing with equal “normatives” not differentiating between ownership of schools (see part 9.1) Number of IVET institutions in the 2008/2009 school year calculated according to the new legislation offers a more comprehensive picture about numbers of general and VET schools and their distribution according to ownership.

Table 16: Number of schools* delivering education in 2008/2009

Type of school		2008/2009
Grammar schools	State/public	156
	Private	40
	Church-affiliated	55
Secondary specialised schools	State/public	393 + 3 schools of other ministries + (1) school of other ministries offering just part-time study
	Private	86 + (3) school offering just part-time studies
	Church-affiliated	20
Conservatories	State/public	6
	Private	6
	Church affiliated	1
Centres of practical training**	State/public	11
	Private	21
	Church-affiliated	0
Schools and centres total	State/public	570
	Private	156
	Church-affiliated	76
Total		802

Source: ÚIPŠ

Notes: * Secondary schools and centres of practical training; schools offering only part-time studies are in brackets; without schools for special education needs (SEN) students

** Centres of practical training (SPV, *strediská praktického vyučovania*)

Serving special education needs (SEN) students

Special schools provide education and training to mentally- and physically-challenged students. Since the early 1990s, the trend to integrate SEN students is increasing and inclusion efforts are supported by legislation and fiscal reward. Despite this, a system of special schools continues to play an important role in assisting SEN students to cope with the demands of the society and the labour market. These are both general stream special schools (basic schools and grammar schools) and vocational stream schools.

The curricula in special SOŠ and SOU (since 2008/2009 only SOŠ) are equivalent to mainstream schools, but they are adjusted to the needs of students. Schools for mentally challenged students are not considered secondary schools. They provide training with three levels of training designation: trained, fully trained, and trained with qualification.

There are also practical schools for those unable to enter secondary vocational training; graduates are expected to perform simple work in households and/or sheltered workshops.

The following table offers the numbers of schools available for students with special education needs.

Table 17: Numbers of special schools (for students with special needs) in the 2008/2009 school

Type of school	Public	Private	Church-affiliated	Total
Special schools	354	20	13	387
Of which				
Basic schools and special basic schools	215	12	6	233
Grammar schools	1	0	0	1
Secondary specialised schools	14	0	1	15
Vocational schools*	44	0	0	44
Practical schools**	46	2	3	51

Source: ÚIPŠ

Notes: * Vocational school (OU, *odborné učilište*)

** Practical schools (PŠ, *praktická škola*)

Mainstream students are after 10 years of compulsory education in the middle of their study either at grammar school or at secondary specialised school, in contrast to those who completed compulsory education at basic school due to repeating classes. Respective pathways of secondary VET are presented in the table below.

Table 18: Secondary VET programmes

Education pathway/programme	Certificate
2-year (extraordinarily 3-year) training branch with a final exam	Certificate on final exam, extraordinarily also a Certificate of Apprenticeship
3 to 4-year training branch with a final exam	Certificate on final exam + a Certificate of Apprenticeship
4 to 5-year study branch with vocational training (<i>odbor s odborným výcvikom</i>) with a “maturita” school-leaving exam	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate (in some cases also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship)
4 to 5-year study branch with practice (<i>odbor s praxou</i>) with a “maturita” school-leaving exam	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate (in some cases also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship)
6-year study branch conservatory	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate after 4 th year*
8-year study branch dance conservatory (containing both lower and upper secondary levels)**	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate together with a certificate of “absolutorium” exam and “absolutorium” diploma after 8 th year

Notes: * with the option to leave conservatory or stay for two additional years to receive “absolutorium” diploma
 ** specific case; it is an upper secondary level from graduate’s age point of view, however graduates are trained at a high level, as documented by “absolutorium”, and classified ISCED 5B

Graduates from upper secondary VET programmes can decide between post-secondary non-tertiary education not leading to a higher level of education, higher professional education leading to a higher level of education which is currently not recognised by Higher Education Act as tertiary education (despite ISCED 5B classification) and tertiary education. Graduates from ISCED 3A VET programmes can apply for any tertiary programme of interest. The table below presents a list of individual programmes.

Table 19: Post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes

Education pathway/programme	Certificate
At least 6 month developing and refresher study with a final “post-maturita” exam	Certificate on final “post-maturita” exam
2-year follow-up study branch with a “maturita” school-leaving exam	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate
At least 2-year qualifying study with a vocational component of “maturita” school-leaving exam (2 nd “maturita”)	“maturita” school-leaving exam certificate (for vocational component)
At least 2-year specialising study with an “absolutorium” exam	Certificate on “absolutorium” exam and “absolutorium” diploma
3 year higher professional study with an “absolutorium” exam	Certificate on “absolutorium” exam and “absolutorium” diploma
Conservatory in final classes (5 th -6 th year of continuing training and after acquiring maturita)	Certificate on “absolutorium” exam and “absolutorium” diploma; programme can be entered only continuing after receiving “maturita” from the same conservatory programme*

Note: * see also explanation within the table on secondary VET programmes above

Programmes available for tertiary students are depicted in the following table.

Table 20: Tertiary programmes

Education pathway/programme	Certificate
1 st level (Bachelor)	Certificate on a state exam and a Bachelor diploma
2 nd level (Master)	Certificate on a state exam and a Magister, Engineer, Doctor diploma
3 rd level (PhD)	Certificate on a state exam and a PhD diploma

In addition to VET for mainstream students, diverse VET programmes are offered for students with special educational needs. Special schools offer programmes equivalent to mainstream programmes but also specific programmes for the mentally challenged.

Table 21: Specific VET programmes for mentally challenged students

Education pathway/programme	Certificate
Practical school	Final certificate (stating the area of activity the pupil is able to perform)
Vocational school	3 types of certificates based on level, on meeting respective standards (“zaškolenie”, “zaučenie”, “vyučenie”); the highest level “vyučenie” resulting in receiving a certificate on final exam and Certificate of Apprenticeship

Promoting participation in IVET

As a consequence of the population decrease, VET schools fight hard to attract students. Schools offering ISCED 3C programmes suffer from a decrease of interest caused by a dramatic decrease in demand for working professions accompanying a restructuring of the economy in the 1990s after the fall of communism. Closing old-profile factories and slow emerging of new working opportunities caused increase of preference for ISCED 3A programmes that were traditionally highly valued by inhabitants as an “entrance ticket” to white collar occupations.

Table 22: Number of graduates by ISCED levels

ISCED	2005/2006	1999/2000	Growth index
3A	62 307	64 523	0.97
3C	17 903	21 993	0.81
4A	2 792	2 117	1.32
5A	37 922	20 129	1.88
5B	1 050	2 124	0.49
6	1 218	446	2.73
Total	123 192	111 332	1.11

Source: ÚIPS, newest available UOE harmonised data

VET schools organise diverse campaigns, including open door days, and visits of surrounding basic schools to present their programmes and opportunities for students. In the 2000s and in particular after joining the EU, interest in studies preparing for working professions again increased as a consequence of boom in automotive industry and electric devices dominantly interested in ISCED 3C graduates. In contrast to other sectors, in these two booming sectors (automotive industry and electric devices production), enterprises facing a lack of workers contribute to campaigning.

Improved cooperation is expected in the future as a consequence of the coming into force of Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET. Newly created bodies, the National VET Council, Regional VET Councils and Sectoral VET Councils are expected to contribute substantially to the promotion of VET in all sectors. Financial incentives are also expected from enterprises due to introduction of recognition of some related costs as tax deductibles. Furthermore, an ESF project, due to start, also contains important dissemination and promotion components.

Quality assurance mechanisms

The IVET system is still based on traditional quality assurance mechanisms:

- input based accreditation of schools; based on formal assessment of compliance of application of school (including non-state schools and school establishments) with conditions (relevant documents) required by law;
- supervision of State School Inspection (*Štátna školská inšpekcia*); its performance is based on the annual plan and results in the annual report on the status of education and upbringing;
- responsibility for quality assigned declaratively by law to respective players (e.g. director of school, establisher, Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*)).

Thus, all working quality system mechanisms in IVET are inherent to the education system. Furthermore, quality checking activities are dominantly aimed at the assessment of students' performance in educational terms. The first impulse to address quality management from the institutional point of view came from Decree of the MŠ No. 9/2006 Coll. on the Structure and Content of Reporting on Educational Activities, Outcomes and Conditions of School and School Facilities (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva SR č. 9/2006 Z. z. o štruktúre a obsahu správ o výchovno-vzdelávacej činnosti, jej výsledkoch a podmienkach škôl a školských zariadení*), which introduced obligatory annual reporting to the public. Anecdotal evidence from reviewing these reports, which necessarily have to be placed on the website of schools, suggests however that no substantial self-evaluation processes occurred or are visible from reporting. A new ESF project to be launched in 2009 should therefore elaborate know-how in support of schools in self-evaluation as well as to improve current know-how of the state inspection. It must be stated that quality assurance has for a long-time been a weak point of the VET system in Slovakia, and that European initiatives based on CQAF and EQARF have so far not been sufficiently reflected.

Nevertheless, there are schools that have launched an individual initiative to adopt the quality management system and have received the ISO norm 9001:2000 certificate⁹.

4.2 IVET at lower secondary level

There is only general education within the lower secondary level (pupils aged 10-15) with marginal exemption – students of the dance conservatory. These students are indicated as belonging to vocational study within UOE statistics. Other students of respective age are in a general education stream (basic schools).

Table 23: Students in lower secondary education by programme orientation in 2006

	ISCED 2 total	ISCED 2 general	%	ISCED 2 pre-vocational	%	ISCED 2 vocational	%
EU27	22 892 085	22 329 149	98	297 528	1	265 408	1
Slovakia	345 462	341 910	99	3 439	1	113	0

Source: Eurostat, last update: 4th July 2008, date of extraction: 26th February 2009

In addition, there are also students indicated as pre-vocational according to UOE; 3 439 in this table. There are several groups of students included here. The first group of students are enrolled in two or three year programmes designed for low achievers from basic school. Students who left basic school without completing lower secondary (general) education (even after repeating classes) are eligible to enter these programmes organised within secondary schools. Thus, these students are about 16-17 years old, while regular lower secondary education graduates are 15 years old. The second group of students includes students from similar programmes used for handicapped students educated within the special education system. The third group of students also includes special education needs students, but in contrast to others, they are mentally disabled and trained within different programmes. Types of programmes can be seen from the table below.

⁹ See also VET Policy Report: Slovak Republic 2008: Progress in the Policy Priority Areas for Vocational Education and Training, example of policy practice in 4.2.2.

Table 24: Types of IVET programmes at lower secondary level

Programme	Sector	ISCED	Balance between		Duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
			general and vocational subjects	school- and work-based training		
Conservatory*	Arts	2A	n/a*	n/a	4 years	Conservatory**
Training for simple and auxiliary working	***	2C	General subjects below 10 % ****	n/a	2 or 3 years	Labour market; complementary studies*****
Training for mentally disabled	***	2C	13 % *****	n/a	3 years	None
Practical school (for mentally severely disabled)		2C	Diverse*****	n/a	3 years	None

Notes: n/a - not applicable as programmes are school based and training in workplace can be organised only after agreement between school and organisation offering workplace for training

* Dancing branch only, however designed as 8 year programme;

** Or any secondary school, if not able/interested to continue

*** Engineering and other metal-processing; Technical chemistry of silicate chemistry; Food-processing; Textile and clothing; Processing of hides, plastics, rubber, shoes production Wood-processing and musical instruments production; Building, geodesy and cartography; Agriculture and forestry and rural development; Economics and organisation, retail and services

**** 126 out of 1 890 total hours within 2 year programmes and 192 out of 2 880 hours within 3 year programmes

***** Programme specially designed to complete lower secondary (general) education as it is not possible for them to continue in secondary education to achieve ISCED3 level; they are however expected to enter labour market and they also prefer to do so

***** e.g. 384 out of 2 976 (13 %) in 3 year long Metallurgy programme

***** Depends on allocation of free and disposable working hours; basic distribution is as follows:

24 - general, 24 - vocational, 15 – free/optional, 15 - disposable of total 78 week hours in three years programme

As confirmed by the tables above, IVET programmes at lower secondary level are marginal in both their volume and target. They are not primarily aimed at providing qualification. Even despite the large share of vocational subjects, training for simple and auxiliary works is aimed at preventing social exclusion and dropping out of school rather than at training for specific profession. Competences acquired here concern low skills which can be acquired on the job as well and in a much shorter time, provided young people are able to find a working position. This is however unlikely. In contrast, training of mentally disabled has an important element of value added qualification, despite the fact that they gain only a low qualification.

In contrast to previous regulations recognising only ISCED 3C vocational qualification as a minimum, since 2008 lower secondary vocational education has been recognised by law and therefore offering a qualification certificate expected to enable placement of low skilled people on the market (see Table 60 depicting levels of education valid since 2008). However, these programmes will also remain marginal after the development of NQF. It has not yet been decided whether they will be assigned a specific level within NQF. It could happen they will be subsumed into one level together with all ISCED 2 level programmes (regardless whether general or vocational).

4.3 IVET at Upper Secondary level

The upper secondary IVET stream is among the strongest in EU countries (with 74 % students in 2006) although the general education stream (with 26 % students in 2006) has been in gradual increase since 1989. The demographic decline and a preference for ISCED 3A over 3C studies changed the originally strongest secondary stream composed of secondary vocational schools' ISCED 3C programmes¹⁰. Increasing enrolment in ISCED 3A programmes and in particular in grammar schools (*G, gymnázium*) and a lack of graduates of ISCED 3C programmes is subject of criticism by business. This criticism also led to the adoption of a new Act on VET.

¹⁰ See Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, part 0401.

Table 25: Students in upper secondary education by programme orientation in 2006

	ISCED 3 total	ISCED 3 general	%	ISCED 3 pre-vocational	%	ISCED 3 vocational	%
EU27	22 205 390	10 723 395	48	1 185 480	5	10 296 515	46
Slovakia	304 976	80 298	26	-	-	224 678	74

Source: Eurostat, last update: 4th July 2008, date of extraction: 26th February 2009

In response to the now almost unclear and non-characteristic names of VET schools, all VET schools have been categorised as secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*) since the 2008/2009 school year. Thus, there are only two secondary education streams, since former secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*) are now also named secondary specialised schools.

Nevertheless, former VET programmes types remained preserved, although all studies were redesigned according to the principles of curricular reform starting in September 2008.

Study branches offered with a strong focus on theory by former secondary specialised schools were renamed as “*study branches with practice*” (*odbor s praxou*) and those offered with a stronger focus on practice by former secondary vocational schools were renamed as “*study branches with vocational training*” (*odbor s odborným výcvikom*). In *study branches with practice* students participate in the working process or assist there in the form of continuing activity for a period set by curricula; this usually happens in the summertime. In *study branches with vocational training*, vocational training is organised in alternance with theoretical education in school workshops or in places suitable for training which are contracted by schools during the whole school year.

Thus, the duality within ISCED 3A study branches remained preserved, although a common state educational programme was issued for a respective group of branches. ISCED 3C training branches typically offered by former secondary vocational schools have also remained preserved. A special stream of VET for students with special needs also exists, similar to ISCED 2C programmes (see part 4.2), accordingly adjusted curricula are used.

Table 26: Types of IVET programmes at upper secondary level according to 2008/2009 reform

Programme	Sector	ISCED	Balance between		Duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
			general/vocational subjects	school- and work-based training		
Study branch with practice	(1)	3A	43-48 % / 57-52 %*	n/a	4 or 5 years	4A, 5B, 5A
Study branch with vocational training	(2)	3A	43-48 % / 57-52 %*	n/a	4 or 5 years	4A, 5B, 5A
Training branch	(3)	3C	about 25 % / 75 %**	n/a	3 years	3A (follow-up)

Notes: n/a - not applicable as programmes are school based and training in workplace can be organised only after agreement between school and organisation offering workplace for training

* 57 %/43 % in study branches with practice at a bilingual school due to more hours of the foreign language; similarly in cases of both types of study branch at schools with minority language of instruction (Hungarian)

** a share of general subjects is slightly higher at schools with minority language of instruction (Hungarian)

(1) Mining and mining geology, Metallurgy, Engineering and other metal-processing, Electrotechnics, Technical chemistry of silicate chemistry, Applied chemistry, Food-processing, Textile and clothing, Processing of hides, plastics, rubber, shoes production, Wood-processing and musical instruments production, Printing industry and media, Building, geodesy and cartography, Transport, post and telecommunication, Special technical specialisations, Agriculture and forestry and rural development, Veterinary sciences, Economics and organisation, retail and services, Library and information sciences, Pedagogy, Arts, applied arts and folk crafts, Healthcare (supervised by the Ministry of Health)

(2) As (1) except Mining and mining geology, Technical chemistry of silicate chemistry, Veterinary sciences, Library and information sciences, Pedagogy, Healthcare

(3) As (1) except Metallurgy, Special technical specialisations, Veterinary sciences, Pedagogy. A state educational programme Information technology was developed as a precondition for creation of respective studies, however later this topic was re-classified as transversal topic relevant for all programmes.

Admission requirements for all types of programmes are set by the respective state educational programmes and have remained unchanged by the 2008 reform. Only graduates from basic schools with completed lower secondary (general) education and, from the legislative point of view (but rarely in practice), also students of the fourth class of 8-year grammar schools and 8-year dance conservatory are entitled to enter secondary specialised schools after successful passing the admission procedure. The admission procedure may or may not comprise admission tests as it is up to individual school policies to decide upon this. In attractive branches with a surplus of demand, admission tests are usually applied. In other cases results in basic schools might be applied or even all candidates accepted. In specific cases set by § 15 of Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 314/2008 Coll. on secondary schools (*Vyhľadška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 314/2008 Z. z. o stredných školách*), special admission regulation is set by law to test special abilities (“talent”) of applicants (e.g. art schools).

The typical age of newly enrolled students is 15 years. An upper age limit for admission is not explicitly set as in practice it is not a point of concern. As compulsory education lasts 10 years, attending at least a first class of secondary school is obligatory for regular students graduating from 9-year basic school without repeating classes. Registration and tuition fees are not applied in public and church-affiliated schools.

Students entering bilingual schools established by international bilateral agreements are marginal exceptions; they are entitled to enter this kind of school one year earlier. Bilingual schools (typically but not exclusively grammar schools) offer five year programmes with a first year focusing on the language of instruction acquisition, as the language of instruction in some subjects is identical with this foreign language. Curriculum is also taken over from the partner country.

Traditionally, the description of “educational goals” was based on the identification of respective knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits, which were addressed as crucial components of curricular documents. Gradually, a shift towards stressing outcomes over education process and European “learning outcomes discourse” contributed to the refinement of descriptions.

Competence-based programming was adopted by the “Standard of Secondary VET” developed by the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV, *Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*), and approved by the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) on 10th July 2002. It was based on six key competences (Communicative and social-interactive; Intra- and interpersonal (including learning to learn); Creative problem solving; Entrepreneurial; Digital (ICT); Civic (“to be a democratic citizen”)) making differences between content standards and performance standards. According to the subsequent manual for development of curricula from 2003, the graduate profile in all VET branches had to consist of key competences, general competences and vocational competences. A 2008 curricular reform based on the “Concept of Two-Level Model of Educational Programmes in VET in the Slovak Republic” (*Návrh koncepcie dvojúrovňového modelu vzdelávacích programov v oblasti odborného vzdelávania a prípravy v Slovenskej republike*), approved by the government on 6th June 2007 follows the same pattern of competence-based curricula.

Since 2008, 17 ISCED 3C and 20 ISCED 3A state educational programmes (for groups of branches – in fact corresponding to sectors of economy) have been developed replacing “basic pedagogical documents” (*základné pedagogické dokumenty*) for all individual study and training branches¹¹. The original general recommendation introduced in 1990 referred to as the 10/30 formula (meaning that 10 % week hours and 30 % of content of original uniform curricula could have been replaced to meet local/regional needs after agreement of relevant stakeholders) is substituted by a framework regulation set by the state education programme valid for respective groups of branches (sectors) and embedded in the newly-adopted Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*). Individual schools are entitled to make use of this framework document to develop their own curriculum expressed by school educational programmes. It is expected that working on school curricula will strengthen the need for a deeper debate on identification of learning outcomes and refinement of outcomes/competence based school curriculum. It is not yet clear however to what extent the shift from input to learning output based curricula will be translated into practice. First signals after the first year of new curriculum development not surprisingly indicate that more time is needed for crucial changes.

Changes in pedagogy and innovativeness in the class and workshops depend dominantly on the individuality of respective teachers and trainers. School directors have little opportunities to stimulate this, as the remuneration of teachers and trainers is comparably poor and tariff-based, with a low share

¹¹ See Tables 1 and 2 to part 0403 in Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008.

of bonuses. In contrast to the tragedy of the 1990s and early 2000s leading to deterioration of the quality of education, caused *inter alia* also by huge modernisation debt, dedicated individuals and schools have gained more options to improve learning environments in schools. Funding of new educational initiatives from businesses as well as ESF projects from EU is aimed at both improving conditions (equipment) and pedagogies. Unlike the earlier period, individual examples of improvement are easily visible. Nevertheless, there is no clear picture about the nation-wide situation concerning the quality of teaching methods and innovativeness, and even no impact from communitarian projects and ESF projects, due to insufficient evidence from monitoring and research. In European projects, auditing financing dominates over content monitoring and impact assessment and research suffers from long-term underfinancing causing almost the non-existence of empirical research. A revival of empirical research is an inevitable precondition for future progress.

All state educational programmes and subsequent school educational programmes based on Decree of the MŠ No. 314/2008 Coll. on Secondary Schools indicate explicitly the certification (see tables in part 4.1) and progression possibilities. The aforementioned decree also regulates conditions of admission to post-secondary studies. Conditions for admission to higher education studies are set autonomously by respective universities and/or their faculties. The National Qualification Framework is in the process of preparation and should make this more transparent, and respective information easier to find on the dedicated electronic portal. No substantial systemic changes are however expected.

Traditionally all basic occupations were covered by respective study or training branches of VET. This is why there were so many VET programmes and diverse VET schools originally concentrating on the preparation of a young labour force for respective sectors of economy. In the mid 1990s under the influence of the evaluation of the VET system and according to the recommendation of Birks, Sinclair and Associates, Ltd., strategic study was intended to reduce the number of programmes and for all about 3 000 occupations registered on the labour market it was intended to develop occupational standards and related educational standards. This project backed by the 1996 government decision was however finally cancelled.

The plurality of studies and VET schools (since 2008 all named secondary specialised schools) remained preserved. It is in order to offer studies corresponding to the requirements of respective occupations and as a consequence of the desire of decision makers to stick to the traditions of VET. A new decree on secondary schools, already in the pipeline and expected to come into force in 2009, recognises 60 names (and types) of secondary specialised schools.

Currently a statistical classification of study and training branches used in programming VET is set by Decree of the Statistical Office SR No. 559/2008 Coll. on Classification of Education Branches (*Vyhľadška Štatistického úradu č. 559/2008 Z. z., Slovenskej republiky, ktorou sa vydáva Štatistická klasifikácia odborov vzdelania*), also containing a respective ISCED code. The Classification of Occupations corresponding to the ISCO-88(COM) is introduced by Measure of the Statistical Office No. 16/2001 Coll. which is however not directly interrelated within curricular documentation. In essence however IVET schools offer the obtaining of a first qualification across all occupations in the national economy.

The Act on VET, coming into force in September 2009, strengthened the involvement of employers in programming IVET in an effort to facilitate entry into the labour market and to prevent the current huge mismatch between IVET and labour market needs.

Correspondence with occupations updated according to recent developments will be secured by correspondence between the National System of Qualifications and the National System of Occupations, to be renewed under the support of specialised ESF projects (see 2.2, 8.1 and 10.3).

As already indicated, the VET stream in Slovakia is still very strong, with a very wide range of specialisations. It is hardly possible to anticipate future developments in VET, as the year 2008 might become a turning point. Till 2008 the VET system was dominantly supply-driven (from the labour market point of view), and at the same time student demand-driven. The table below depicts a shift of interests of students and/or their parents in entering a respective kind of secondary schools. In 2006 only 42 % of the respective age group entered secondary vocational schools, in contrast to 59 % in 1989.

Table 27: Newly enrolled students by secondary school branches in 1989, 2002 and 2006

Year	SOU		SOŠ		G		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1989	51 807	59.0	22 052	25.1	14 017	15.95	87 876	100
2002	37 311	42.3	30 318	34.4	20 482	23.25	88 111	100
2006	35 564	42.1	28 450	33.7	20 505	24.26	84 519	100
Difference 06/89	-16 243	-	+6 398	-	+6 488	-	-3 356	-

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

Notes: SOU secondary vocational schools (*stredné odborné učilištia*)

SOŠ secondary specialised schools (*stredné odborné školy*)

G grammar schools (*gymnázia*)

In 2006, 15 262 newly enrolled into 4 or 5-year G, 5 178 into 5th grade of 8-year G, 65 into 3rd grade of 6-year G, 20 505 total in G.

This results in a decrease of graduates in particular in ISCED 3C training branches preparing students for blue-collar professions. In 2006 there were 20 % fewer ISCED 3C graduates than in 2000, as visible in the table below.

Table 28: Numbers of all secondary graduates by ISCED levels in 2000 and 2006

ISCED	2005/2006	1999/2000	Growth index
3A	62 307	64 523	0.97
3C	17 903	21 993	0.81

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, UOE harmonised data

Dissatisfaction of business with this trend and a dramatic decrease in the available labour force after Slovakia's entry into the EU, and the entry of many Slovak workers onto labour markets in the EU led to calls for regulation of the access of students to grammar schools and ISCED 3A VET study branches. The new Act on VET is opening the door for translation of employers' needs into IVET and even regulation of admissions into respective secondary schools. Nevertheless, without counterbalancing their power by taking into account also other factors, i.e. the wishes and behaviour of students and their parents, this could result in malpractice similar to introducing per capita financing without a quality check of graduates, which caused a decline in the "production" of ISCED 3C graduates and the increase of ISCED 3A graduates indicated above.

The future will show to what extent regional VET councils affiliated to self-governing regions, and the self-governing regions themselves, will manage to balance lobbying and regulate inflow into respective programmes appropriately. It must be stressed that not purely labour market demand and employers' co-funding (e.g. within the German-style dual system) but the requests of employers for VET graduates financed from public money should serve as proxy data for anticipation of labour market needs. It is clear that the development of know-how for anticipation and forecasting skill needs is very urgent in support of evidence-based policy making.

4.4 Apprenticeship training

There is no typical apprenticeship training in Slovakia and there are no apprentices, although ISCED 3C students from secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*) were often considered and called apprentices. They were however regular secondary school students, according to the law, and as a rule with no contract with employers. Since 2008 all students, including ISCED 3C students of former SOU, are students of secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*), according to Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*). Their practical training was and is usually school-based. Even if organised outside the school, in centres (or workplaces) of practical training, it is ensured by a contract between the school and the provider. Nevertheless, students educated for individuals and legal entities may receive theoretical education at school and practical training at the workplace of this entity. This is however a marginal case, permanently below 1 % in contrast to the 1980s, when SOU students were under contract with an organisation co-financing their training and offering the students pocket money.

The Act on VET in force since September 2009 will stimulate employers to contract students, recognising related eligible costs of employers as tax deductible. Nevertheless, even these students will remain considered students of the school-based VET system. On the other hand, it can start to indicate employers' preference, and gradually also typical apprenticeship training or at least alternance training might occur in the future.

4.5 Other youth programmes and alternative pathways

Slovakia is among the EU countries with the lowest number of drop-outs and early school leavers, and therefore alternative programmes are quite marginal. Nevertheless, statistics would be different for the Roma ethnic minority; in particular the Roma population living in segregated settlements. Ethnic statistics are however not available as collecting data on the ethnic principle is forbidden. According to the 2001 census only 19.9 % of those aged 20-24 who declared themselves as belonging to the Roma nationality (and representing only a fragment of all ethnic Roma) received ISCED 3C or higher level education, in contrast to 89.4 % of the total population of the same age group.

There are specific programmes to assist low-skilled or inexperienced people's integration into the labour market. They are, however, organised within active labour market policies and cannot be classified as pure IVET programmes. Two of these can be perceived as interlinked with IVET:

The first initiative is targeted at adults without completed lower secondary education. The objective of the programme is to bring them 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 level education is very low for successful placement on the labour market in Slovakia. The employment rate of 15 to 64 aged Slovak inhabitants with ISCED 0-2 level of education is the lowest among the EU countries, with in 2008 15.9 % compared to 48.1 % in EU27.

The second ALMP instrument can be perceived as even more strongly linked to IVET as it was applied for graduates from secondary and tertiary schools who had graduated at a maximum 2 years previously and had failed to enter employment. Eligible graduates were given a contribution (since 2008 significantly increased and equal to the subsistence minimum) for a period of six months in the case they were accepted by an organisation offering them an opportunity to improve professional skills and gain practical experience from employment (for further details and newest development see part 5.3).

The new Education Act in force since 2008 introduced a positive change with respect to refining the qualification (education level) range. 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 (*nižšie stredné odborné vzdelanie*) by completing a 2 or 3 year long ISCED 2C "training for simple and auxiliary working". These programmes were originally aimed at retaining young people within education and training in order to enable them to obtain at least some competences. In contrast to former graduates from the former programme with unclear status, they are now clearly embedded in the system. This might open the window for many low skilled adults to receiving a qualification, in particular the unemployed who failed to complete basic school. Graduates from these programmes are classified as graduates from "ISCED 2 pre-vocational" studies within UOE statistics, and are therefore also mentioned in part 4.2.

4.6 Vocational education and training at post-secondary (non tertiary) level

Traditionally, there were two kinds of post-secondary non tertiary programmes in Slovakia:

- follow-up programmes offered to ISCED 3C graduates; and
- three types of "post-maturita" programmes for ISCED 3A graduates (refresher programmes, specialising programmes, qualifying programmes).

In addition, higher professional programmes are newly stipulated, reflecting experience from a long period of experimental provision initiated by the PHARE programme in the 1990s.

Table 29: Types of IVET programmes at post-secondary level according to the 2008/2009 reform

Programme	Sector	ISCED	Balance between		Duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
			general/vocational subjects	school- and work-based training		
Follow-up study branch	(1)	3A	44-47 % / 56-53 %*	n/a	2	4A, 5B, 5A
Qualifying	(2)	4A	100 %	n/a	2 year	5B, 5A
Specialising	(3)	5B	100 %	n/a	2 years	5A
Higher professional	(3)	5B	100 %	n/a	3 years	5A
Refresher	(2)	4A	100 %	n/a	6 month+	4A, 5B, 5A

Notes: n/a - not applicable as programmes are school-based and training in workplace can be organised only based on agreement between school and organisation offering workplace for training

* share of general subjects is slightly higher at schools with minority language of instruction (Hungarian)

(1) The same as in cases of study branch with practice listed under (1) below Table 26 in part 4.3 except the following: Special technical specialisations, Veterinary sciences, Library and information sciences, Pedagogy, Healthcare (supervised by the Ministry of Health (MZ, *Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*));

(2) The same as in cases of study branch with practice listed under (1) below Table 26 in part 4.3 plus Physics and mathematics, Economic sciences, Legal sciences; Special technical specialisations and Security services (both supervised by the Ministry of Interior (MV, *Ministerstvo vnútra*));

(3) Mining and mining geology, Engineering and other metal-processing, Electrotechnics, Food-processing, Textile and clothing, Transport, post and telecommunication, Special technical specialisations, Agriculture and forestry and rural development, Veterinary sciences, Economics and organisation, retail and services, Legal sciences, Pedagogical science, Arts, applied arts and folk crafts, Healthcare (supervised by Ministry of Health).

Follow-up programmes are offered to ISCED 3C graduates wishing to receive a higher status ISCED 3A “maturita” school-leaving certificate. As a rule, it lasts two years and finishes with a “maturita” examination certifying an ISCED 3A level of education. This kind of programme is offered to adults of all ages. Quite often, 18-year old graduates of ISCED 3C programmes enter this programme in full-time study immediately after finishing the ISCED 3C programme. Older people prefer it in the form of part-time study.

Qualifying programmes are of at least 2 years in length completed by a “maturita” school-leaving examination. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. These programmes are aimed at gaining an additional or new qualification as they obtain a second “maturita” school-leaving certificate (in a branch other than the one studied earlier).

Specialising programmes are of at least 2 years in length completed by an “absolutorium” exam. These studies are rated as an ISCED 5B level of education. These programmes are aimed at acquiring new specific knowledge and skills related to previously received education and training within the same or similar branch of study. In contrast with qualifying programmes, graduates are also awarded a higher level of education according to the legislation, i.e. higher professional education level (*vyššie odborné vzdelanie*).

Higher professional programmes are of 3 years in length, completed by an “absolutorium” exam. In contrast to specialising programmes, no strong interlinking in content with previous study is required. Graduates are awarded a higher level of education also according to the legislation, i.e. higher professional education level.

Refresher programmes (upgrading skills and innovative) are of at least 6 months in length and are completed by a final exam. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. The programmes are aimed at updating of previously acquired knowledge and skills.

ISCED codes to all types of IVET programmes tabled above were originally assigned by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPS, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) in order to enable delivering the UOE statistics. Coding referred to the content and exit procedure of programmes. There was, however, a problem with legislative contradicting this coding instead of backing it. The new Education Act in force since September 2008 solved the problem at least partly as an ISCED code is indicated directly within the respective state educational programme. Nevertheless, higher professional studies delivered by secondary schools are described there as “post-secondary or tertiary”, opening the door for the further recognition of some of these programmes as tertiary. Despite ISCED coding 5B, they are still not accepted as tertiary programmes by the Act on higher education institutions.

All programmes tabled and described above are regulated in a same way as upper secondary programmes described earlier, as they are all offered by secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*). Thus, the aforementioned state educational programmes (see part 4.3) stipulate details for post-secondary studies (with the exception of refresher programmes) together with details for secondary studies for respective sectors. Refresher programmes are to be elaborated autonomously by schools in cooperation with other players to secure quality and compete on the market, only broadly sticking to respective state educational programmes.

As visible from the table below, there are only vocational programmes offered within post-secondary non-tertiary education. Furthermore, a decrease in graduates (see part 4.1) is also confirmed by a decrease in participation from the peak in 2003.

Table 30: Students participating in post-secondary non-tertiary education by orientation

Year	ISCED 4 total	ISCED 4 general	%	ISCED 4 pre-vocational	%	ISCED 4 vocational	%
2007	4 159	0	0	0	0	4 159	100
2006	4 802	0	0	0	0	4 802	100
2003	6 324	0	0	0	0	6 377	100

Source: Eurostat, UOE data

The introduction of bachelor studies after implementation of the Bologna declaration seems to be the reason for the decrease in post-secondary “post-maturita” studies. In particular higher professional studies are endangered by bachelor studies at technical universities.

Table 31: Students in ISCED 5B in Slovakia

Year	2007	2006	2003	2007/2003 Index
Higher professional studies	2 241	2 824	6 118	0.37

Source: Eurostat, UOE data

4.7 Vocational education and training at tertiary level

Major characteristics of IVET at tertiary level

All Slovak public higher education institutions were expected to provide university type education in accordance with Act No. 172/1990 Coll. on Higher Education. Within the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*), last amended by Act No. 462/2008, it is proposed to allow for the existence of non-university education and non-research based tertiary education. The evaluation of universities is already in progress and in 2009 all present universities should be newly categorised into

- universities (offering studies on all three levels);
- higher education institutions (offering bachelor and master studies and no PhD studies); and
- professional higher education institutions (offering predominantly bachelor studies and doing only applied research).

All higher education institutions have reshaped their studies to a three-cycle model: with bachelor, master and doctoral studies (with exceptions of specific studies, e.g. medical studies and theological studies) in order to be compatible with the Bologna Declaration. There are, however, no higher education 5B studies offered in Slovakia.

ISCED 5B participants visible in UOE statistics for Slovakia, as within the table below, are in fact students of higher professional studies, already mentioned in part 4.6 who, contrary to their expectations and the expectations of schools originally running these studies in a form of experimental programmes, are not considered tertiary students. In contrast to this, the table below indicates a comparably high share of participants in PhD studies.

Table 32: Students in higher education in Slovakia by programme orientation in 2006

Year	ISCED 5+6 total	ISCED 5A	%	ISCED 5B	%	ISCED 6	%
2006	197 943	184 380	93	2 824	1	10 739	5

Source: Eurostat, last update: 4th July 2008, date of extraction: 9th March 2009

Conditions for admission to higher education studies are set autonomously by respective universities and/or their faculties. No entrance tests are obligatory. In practice they are applied only in those universities/study branches where there is a surplus of demand over their capacities. In contrast to this, students may be accepted without entrance examination for studies with low demand, with the only precondition required the attainment of upper secondary level education (“maturita”). As students are allowed to apply for more universities (programmes), some universities organise a second round admission procedure during summer to replace students successfully accepted for more programmes who decided to choose another programme, and to attract other free students.

Regular students entering higher education are 19-years old, as this is the regular age of graduation from secondary school. Graduates of a long-form grammar school who originally entered the 8 year grammar school after completion of the fourth class of basic school usually receive a school-leaving certificate one year earlier and therefore could have entered higher education studies one year earlier. The newly enrolled students of the 2008/2009 school year are the last ones who were given this advantage, as the new Education Act postponed the entry to long-form grammar schools after completing the fifth class of basic school. Some students enter higher education older due to a longer form of secondary programme or because of any other reason. Beyond the age of 26 they are indirectly penalized by obligatory cofinancing studies, paying for health insurance, and their parents are not eligible for child allowances and tax bonuses (if a parent is employed). There is no legal regulation upon an upper limit for admission to higher education; however older people as a rule prefer part-time studies.

Marginal registration fees are required to cover the costs of the admission procedure; however, no tuition fees are required for full-time studies at state/public universities. Students studying more than one study programme or studying longer than the officially programmed length of study are, however, payers. Since the 2008/2009 academic year higher education institutions offer part-time studies officially in two modes: for better ranked students according to admission procedure for free, and for worse ranked students for fees. However, the number of part-time students is regulated, as the total number of part-timers at a university cannot exceed the total number of full-time students. In addition to this regulation (which will not be applied for future higher professional educational institutions according to the Higher Education Act), the number of students is regulated by the amount of means from the state budget available for respective schools in the form of a contract with the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) and based on a calculation formula (see paragraphs on “Funding tertiary education” in part 9.1).

Currently, a continual study comprising first two levels usually lasts five years, sometimes six years. Master studies last 2, 2.5 or 3 years. Bachelor studies lasting three years have limited popularity, partly due to the fact that tertiary education is free, except for part-time students over the officially set quota.

PhD studies last 3 or 4 years; in part-time programmes 5 years.

Forms of education delivery

Distance learning programmes were originally typical for part-time studies and were further promoted by the PHARE programme “Multi Country Co-operation in Distance Education” in the 1990s. The Slovak Distance Education Network, consisting of the National Centre for Distance Education (*Národné centrum dištančného vzdelávania*) and four regional centres of distance education, was established. Despite the dissolution of this network and the re-profiling of regional centres, the promotion of distance learning contributed to a more variable higher education provision.

Table 33: Number of students* in full-time programmes by form and level of study in 2008

Form and level		Public HEI	Private HEI	State HEI	Total
Bachelor	Face to face	82 935	4 278	1 169	88 382
	Distance learning	911	0	0	911
	Combined	1 687	0	0	1 687
	Total	85 533	4 278	1 169	90 980
Master	Face to face	24 281	631	118	25 030
	Distance learning	262	0	0	262
	Combined	1 960	0	0	1 960
	Total	26 503	631	118	27 252
Continual**	Face to face	18 985	0	103	19 088
	Distance learning	27	0	0	27
	Combined	0	0	0	0
	Total	19 012	0	103	19 115
All	Face to face	126 201	4 909	1 390	132 500
	Distance learning	1 200	0	0	1 200
	Combined	3 647	0	0	3 647
	Total	131 048	4 909	1 390	137 347

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*), calculated by authors

Notes: *Just students with Slovak nationality in full-time programmes at HEI, except PhD studies as of 31st October 2008

** Master study containing first two levels consecutively and not allowing entering it as follow up after completed appropriate Bachelor studies

Although distance learning and combined learning are much more presented in its share in part-time studies, it must be concluded that the provision of distance learning is underdeveloped in Slovakia, partly hampered by a long period of lagging behind in the technological development of the educational infrastructure at higher education institutions. With recent improvement of ICT opportunities and better connectivity of inhabitants, improvement of provision of e-learning is expected, unless hampered by the reluctance of an ageing teaching staff to change traditional methods of delivery.

Curricula elements

Higher education institutions are fully autonomous in the development of their curricula, only being limited by

- the accreditation procedure, since costs of non-accredited programmes are not co-financed from the state budget (contract with the Ministry of Education); and
- the descriptive framework of study programme requirements, within which core topics, addressing the core knowledge of graduates are obligatorily set out, (referred to as “study branch core”).

These descriptions were elaborated by an expert commission under the supervision of the Slovak Rectors’ Conference (SRK, *Slovenská rektorská konferencia*) for all study branches. These study branch cores are the subject of further development and change. Only the study programmes listed in the registry of study branches, issued by the decision of the Ministry of Education, and complying with the aforementioned study branch cores, are eligible for accreditation and subsequently for certification.

Curriculum development must finally materialise into an accreditation proposal within which a profile of graduates must be described, containing descriptions of their theoretical knowledge, practical abilities (skills), complementary knowledge and skills. Although curriculum development is in essence competence based, the quality of elaboration differs. Similarly, although all programmes are credit based, options for individualised routes vary among respective programmes. Accreditation is dominantly input based and any innovation in curriculum must not go beyond the agreed courses in terms of their title and their description on the so-called information sheet of the course.

Successful completion of accredited study programmes result in certification (Bachelor, Master and PhD diploma) issued and signed by the university rector, as faculties are not legal bodies anymore.

Students enrolled on a programme not accredited by the Accreditation Commission (AK, *Akreditačná komisia*) as a result of their quality, insufficient amount of quality teaching staff or weak research and development activities, are at risk of not receiving a diploma, or of a transfer to another higher education institution in order to be subjected to state examination. State examination, followed by the awarding of a diploma cannot be done in the institution without the accreditation of the respective programme.

State exams are composed of the defending of the master/bachelor thesis and an oral/written examination in subjects explicitly listed within the accreditation documentation. Portfolio assessment is gradually gaining importance in contrast to traditional examinations.

Main progress, trends and possible impacts on education and training policies

Within the last 20 years many new higher education institutions, including private ones, have been established. In 2008 there were 20 public, 3 state (military academy, police academy, and medical university focusing on in-service training) and 11 (including one foreign) private higher education institutions. The foreign university established in the Czech Republic offers programmes in Slovakia accredited according to Slovak legislation. Thus there are altogether 34 higher education institutions now, in contrast to 13 in 1989.

In 2002, the Catholic University in Ružomberok (*Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku*) offering Catholic religion-based education, and in 2004 the J. Selye University in Komárno (*Univerzita J. Selyeho v Komárne*) serving the Hungarian minority using Hungarian as the language of instruction, were established.

The table below indicates the dramatic increase in participation in higher education – over three times more since 1990 and two times more since 1998.

Table 34: Students in ISCED 5A higher education in Slovakia

Year	2007	2006	2000	1998	1990	2007/1998 Index	2007/1990 Index
5A tertiary studies	204 645	184 380	123 136	101 982	60 567	2.01	3.38

Source: Eurostat, UOE data (1998 – 2007), ÚIPŠ national statistics (1990 – the 1989/1990 academic year)

The increase in graduates is a bit lower, but still steep and raises questions about quality standards. There were 34 019 graduates from ISCED 5A programmes in 2007 in contrast to 18 516 in 1999, according to the Eurostat UOE data.

Short track tertiary education should be promoted more in order to change the attitude of the population of secondary school graduates who usually consider it as an uncompleted master study. Furthermore, bachelor studies should be redesigned in order to provide a solid base also for assimilation into the labour market.

Universities are much more open towards LLL now, as they depend on earnings from the provision of diverse paid activities. There are LLL institutes as a rule established at universities for the provision of LLL, and, in addition, all faculties provide LLL in line with their fields of interest. Universities are also stimulated to earn from LLL by current financial regulations as the contribution from the state covers only part of their expenditure.

5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults

5.1 Formal education

5.1.1 General background (administrative structure and financing)

Main objectives of CVET and adult education

The main objectives of CVET were traditionally considered within an economic frame, as personal development

- to acquire higher qualification necessary for promotion;
- to increase employability; and
- in general, to raise productivity, competitiveness, and economic efficiency, in particular via upgrading relevant skills for a relevant purpose, regardless of age.

The main objectives of activities perceived as adult education were traditionally less focused on employment related aspects, and more on the quality of life of adults. It was considered as a complementary activity in particular to satisfy personal and social needs and interests not necessarily related to the workplace.

Now, CVET and adult education are seen as an integral part of lifelong education/learning. Nevertheless, regardless of the terms used, the personal, demand driven learning of adults should be distinguished from training driven by employers' requirements, in order to better understand the population's behaviour with regard to LLL, and to develop targeted interventions within policy making.

The priority of future LLL development was stated in the Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*), adopted by the government on 25th April 2007, as follows:

“The main goal is the completion of the system of lifelong learning and the system of lifelong guidance in such a way that the system would make access to repeated and flexible obtaining of new qualifications by citizens easier through good-quality education obtained, not only in the formal but also in the non-formal system of education, and in the system of informal learning with the assistance of complex counselling and guidance services throughout life, and hence to help people to sustain the highest possible employment level as well as to increase the participation of the population in lifelong learning to 15 %, complying with the principle of equality of opportunities.“

Following the strategy, a new act on LLL had to be developed by September 2007 (according to measure 8.2 of the strategy). Legislative principles were approved by the government on 6th June 2007, and then higher priority in preparation was given to the Act on VET, which however also indirectly addresses LLL, through, for example, the creation of VET centres based on the cooperation between self-governing regions and respective economy sector stakeholders. The act on LLL is expected to come in force in 2010. For further details concerning CVET legislation see part 3.3.

Financing LLL had to be one of the crucial points addressed by the new act on LLL. The Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*), in cooperation with the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC), launched an invitation to tender for producing an analysis studying the alternative ways of financing LLL, and proposing appropriate instruments. However, it is likely that the analysis, produced by *AJG Consulting* will have little impact on the Ministry of Finance stance as a consequence of the financial crisis. The traditional reluctance of the Ministry of Finance to co-finance LLL from tax money, is very likely to be even further strengthened due to the harsh decline of tax yields, increasing state budget deficit over the Maastricht criteria, and the recommended fiscal austerity measures by macroeconomists.

For a detailed description of current status in financing CVET see part 9.2.

Correspondence between the formal qualifications and the labour market

There is no National System of Qualifications explicitly covering all sectors, segments and learning settings in Slovakia. There are different segments of formal qualifications and their regulation differs depending on the respective sectors (see part 5.1.2). There is a very strictly set and applied system of

initial VET programmes leading to qualifications, which can also be obtained through formal CVET, designed for part-time studies. These studies and qualifications are supply driven rather than demand driven with regard to labour market needs. This is partly due to tradition and the resistance to change of schools and legislation, but also due to the broader profiles of graduates. Although this system is becoming more flexible as well, it might be seen as rigid compared to CVET which is aimed at training for specific tasks or jobs. In contrast to IVET and the segment of formal CVET for part-timers, other segments of CVET are dominantly market driven. Such CVET, however, encompasses both formal and non-formal settings: enterprise training, labour market training and training to increase employability of individuals may or may not be labelled as formal CVET. As a rule, legislatively set specific qualifying conditions (sometimes also called specific vocational capabilities) make a difference. It is however not possible to say whether there is correspondence between formal qualifications and the labour market, as there are many players setting qualifying conditions with diverse experience and philosophy, and there is no universal methodology sensitive to the identification of labour market needs for setting commonly agreed qualification requirements .

Although there has been no legislation adopted yet to recognise partial qualifications and/or prior learning, initiatives can be seen to assist people to enter the labour market without fully recognised qualifications (see part 2.2). Some active secondary VET schools offer modular programmes tailored to specific requirements (not corresponding to full profiles of respective graduates) of future employers. This is usually as a result of good cooperation in a triangle comprising the employer, the labour office and school, as costs of studies are covered by the employer and/or the labour office.

Recognition of partial qualifications will be a stipulation of the new act on LLL.

Bringing learning closer to learners

There is a wide network of secondary and tertiary VET institutions spread over the country offering formal IVET, as well as formal CVET for part-time students. As their capacities are much larger than the demand, they are very flexible in bringing learning closer to learners. Tertiary institutions are ready to create local affiliations wherever there is a demand. Similarly, it can be assumed that CVET organised to obtain sectoral qualification is also market driven and flexible in provision unless there are corporate restrictions enabled by law. There is anecdotal evidence about the restricted flexibility caused by protectionism of professional chambers. It is expected that e-learning based courses will be offered more, with the increase of ICT skills of the population. There is no data about numbers and fields of study of e-learning courses already successfully implemented. There are many experimental courses, but they are often vulnerable as they depend on project funding.

NGOs are not involved in formal CVET unless they participate in the provision of CVET in affiliation with schools. Similarly, workplace learning is typical for non-formal rather than formal CVET. Of course, workplace training is inevitably a part of formal training in the case of specific professions in which practice can be obtained only at a workplace. A new Act on VET, in force since 1st September 2009, introduces the establishment of regional centres of VET offering quality IVET and CVET based on earlier regional experience and sectoral experience (automotive industry). It is expected that these regional centres of VET will become leaders in the provision of quality training as they will be excellently equipped in cooperation with regional authorities and employers (sectoral players).

5.1.2 Major characteristics of formal CVET

Qualifications characteristics

There are no levels of qualifications explicitly set by law. There are only levels of education explicitly set by law, and the level of qualification can be partly derived from this.

In case of part-time studies provided by secondary schools and higher education institutions qualifications (comprising however a level of education only) can be described in terms of ISCED levels. ISCED 2C, 3A, 3C, 4A and 5B levels are explicitly indicated within the so-called state educational programmes, i.e. documents obligatory for the development of school educational programmes detailing the curricula of the respective school. ISCED 5A and 6 levels are explicitly recognised within higher education.

Specific sectoral qualifications are as a rule defined as a composition of educational level (which can be directly classified by an ISCED level), specific qualifying conditions, sometimes described as specific vocational capabilities, and experience already gained in the respective field. Furthermore, any

employer can specify in detail the additional requirements for a specific job. The individual who does not meet these additional requirements is considered not qualified for this job although he/she can be fully qualified for the occupation related to this job.

Trexima Bratislava, Ltd. (*Trexima Bratislava, s.r.o.*) has been assigned by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) to update the National System of Occupations (*Národná sústava povolanií*) based on its experience within the Czech Republic implementing the “Integrated System of Type Positions” (ISTP, *Integrovaný systém typových pozícií*). Thus, Trexima Bratislava will also become an important player in the development of the National System of Qualifications (NSQ) compatible with the European Qualification Framework. Academia Istropolitana is expected to be responsible for the ESF funded project planned by the Ministry of Education to adjust the Slovak NSQ to EQF.

Main formal CVET providers

The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) maintains a list of CVET providers stemming from the registry of the Ministry of Interior (MV, *Ministerstvo vnútra*). In 2008, the institute addressed 4 743 providers when collecting statistical data. The number of private and non-state CVET providers has increased significantly in the 1990s, some of them however do not offer CVET on a regular basis, and some of them are just interested to have the chance to offer CVET, if appropriate, and currently are not interested in doing so. The largest of the non-state training institutions, and the only one with a regional network is the Academy of Education (*Akadémia vzdelávania*) with centres in 38 cities spread over the whole country. This institution originated from the dominant state adult education provider of the former regime before 1989. Of course, there are also many other strong private providers often linked to internationally recognised training institutions competing on the market.

A list of educational institutions and their educational activities prepared by the ÚIPŠ on an annual basis is available at www.uips.sk/dalsie-vzdelavanie. An important source of websites and addresses of the strong players is the website of the Association of Adult Education Institutions (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých*) at www.aivd.sk.

Lists of providers of CVET are also available from many commercial websites, e.g. www.zlatestranky.sk/zs/hf/vzdelavacie-zariadenia-a-agentury. Lists of courses (and respective providers) are at www.education.sk. A list of accredited programmes with the contact addresses of providers is offered by the Ministry of Education at <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=4129>. It is however not always clearly indicated within the aforementioned lists whether the respective course/programme corresponds to formal or non-formal settings. Furthermore, part-time studies are, as a rule, not promoted within these lists.

Main characteristics of curricula

Curricula within formal CVET part-time studies provided by secondary schools and higher education institutions correspond to full-time programmes, as part-time and full-time studies are equivalent according to law. There is a difference in the number of face-to-face lessons, as more room is left for individual study. Since September 2009, with the coming into force of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (Education Act) (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*) curricula are to be key competence, and learning outcome, based. Thus, curricula based on key competences and learning outcomes for both full-time and part-time programmes are gradually being developed.

The Accreditation Commission for Continuing Education affiliated to the Ministry of Education (AK MŠ, *Akreditačná komisia Ministerstva školstva SR pre ďalšie vzdelávanie*) responsible for accreditation of educational programmes also supports modularisation and outcome based approaches within the evaluation procedure of the proposal and through a template prescribed for submission.

Curricula within formal sectoral CVET are regulated by sectoral legislation differently. In some sectors, a learning outcome based approach is adopted (e.g. in nuclear power sector qualifications), in others a traditional approach, based on obligatory numbers of training hours, still dominates (e.g. concerning driving schools). In the health sector, where formal CVET is the most strictly regulated, programmes are accredited by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the Ministry of Health (MZ, *Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*), which displays at its websites lists of accredited public and private institutions.

Quality assurance mechanisms

CVET provided by secondary schools and higher education institutions within formal education follows the same quality assurance mechanisms as applied in IVET. School educational programmes have to stick to state educational programmes, university programmes have to make submissions for accreditation to the Accreditation Commission, an advisory body to the government.

The Accreditation Commission affiliated to the Ministry of Education which is responsible for accreditation of educational programmes, as well as the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the Ministry of Health, both concentrate on assessment of input conditions and as a rule output quality is left up to the market power and clients. No national quality assurance programmes were elaborated and no quality assurance mechanisms based on specific European tools (CQAF, EQARF) were made obligatory. Improvement in this area is expected as a result of the new legislation on LLL.

There are, however, positive examples from practice: VUJE a.s. is an engineering company that performs design, supply, implementation, research and training activities, particularly in the field of nuclear and conventional power generation. Training to obtain qualification for nuclear plant technician positions is based on job analysis and learning outcomes, and is certified according to ISO norm 9001. This training is internationally recognised and foreign specialists are trained there, too.

Main characteristics of training programmes

There is no data about the main characteristics of CVET programmes. Although all programmes of formal CVET indicate objectives; target group; admission criteria; duration, assessment and progression as it is required in the process of accreditation, there were no surveys conducted to analyse the respective features of CVET. The ratio of general competences to vocational competences depends on the type of training and it is impossible to offer detailed data.

An initial picture about programmes by field of training can be obtained from the Ministry of Education data on accredited programmes (“educational activities” according to the vocabulary of the relevant legislation) in the following table.

Table 35: CVET programmes (“activities”) by fields accredited by the Ministry of Education

Fields	Programmes	
	N	%
Pedagogy	98	2.1
Humanities and Art	120	2.57
General programmes	237	5.07
Agriculture, Veterinary	238	5.09
Technology, Processing, Constructing	437	9.34
Health care, Social security	465	9.94
Services	476	10.18
Languages	650	13.9
Natural sciences, Mathematics, Informatics	699	14.95
Social sciences, Entrepreneurship, Law	1 240	26.51
Other	17	0.36
Total	4 677	100

Source: MŠ

Note: * listed are programmes accredited between 9th October 2003 to 23rd June 2008

VET possibilities for adults without any previous background in VET

All citizens have access to formal education in a form of part-time study at secondary and tertiary level (after meeting admission criteria that usually include education level attainment and in specific cases also health conditions) at any point in their lives.

Furthermore, adults have access to certified training provided by various institutions within CVET programmes accredited by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for Continuing Education. In this case however it is up to the employers whether they recognise this certificate as a substitute for formal qualification or not. In some cases these certificates are sufficient for carrying out a trade (e.g. massage services), as stipulated in detail in the annex of the aforementioned Trade

Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. In some cases these certificates and practice are sufficient for carrying out a trade.

Job seekers are entitled to training for the labour market according to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. In some cases a job seeker participates in a tailor-made retraining course meeting the requirements of the potential/future employer (based on an agreement between the labour office and the potential/future employer) who recognises a certificate obtained as sufficient for performing the agreed job.

Distance learning programmes

Distance learning is traditionally offered in part-time programmes by higher education institutions, as can be seen from the table below.

Table 36: Number of students* in part-time programmes at HEI by form of study as of 31st October 2008**

Form	Public HEI	Private HEI	State HEI	Total
Face to face	41 601	20 467	2 898	64 966
Distance	5 155	487	0	5 642
Combined	3 533	2 821	0	6 354
Total	50 289	23 775	2 898	76 962

Source: ÚIPŠ

Notes: * Just students with the Slovak nationality

** except PhD studies

The PHARE programme “Multi Country Co-operation in Distance Education”, which was conducted between 1995 and 1999 initiated the creation of the National Centre for Distance Education (*Národné centrum dištančného vzdelávania*) and the creation of the Slovak Distance Education Network. Although the National Centre for Distance Education was closed in 2000 and transformed into the Institute of Lifelong Learning (ICV, *Inštitút celoživotného vzdelávania*) at the Slovak University of Technology (STU, *Slovenská technická univerzita*), and similarly other network members were transformed, activities at universities have remained. Which institutions support e-learning can be found on the list of registered sites at the popular free platform at www.moodle.org.

Distance learning can also be offered by secondary VET schools as it is explicitly mentioned in § 54 (10) of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. Data is, however, not available as it is not contained within the regular collection of data of ÚIPŠ.

Current provision of distance learning or its further development is primarily connected with the ESF as a source of funding. Universities are interested in the gradual development of virtual campuses, however, they are usually hampered by a lack of resources and the reluctance of staff to reduce the number of face-to-face lessons. Nevertheless, several universities work at the creation of centres of distance learning. Furthermore, diverse institutes of LLL offer distance learning in order to compete on the market.

Distance learning is gradually gaining importance within the professional staff development. Even in-service teacher training which was traditionally provided in a face-to-face form by regional in-service training institutions is changing due to the lack of funding of travel costs and the reluctance of directors of schools to free teachers from schools during their teaching time. A good example is the e-learning course of personal management provided by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre Bratislava in cooperation with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of Slovak University of Technology making use of human and technical resources of the former Local Centre of Distance Education, and funded by the ESF.

With the increase in citizens' familiarity with ICT, distance learning programmes are also on the increase in the very competitive CVET/LLL market offered by private CVET providers in an even more dynamic way than public providers.

Measures fostering access to CVET

There are no explicit measures set in support of fostering access to CVET and fostering CVT in enterprises, except for funding via the ESF. It was envisaged that the act on LLL would set a specific

measure, as was noted in § 27 of the draft act from early 2009 speaking *inter alia* about tax incentives and learning vouchers.. However it is unlikely that there will be an agreement among key players soon about an appropriate measure. This can also be assumed from the result of negotiations concerning the new Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave*). The VET Development Fund established by this law will be a non-state legal object entity collecting funds from donations from national and international entities (except state administration authorities) and the voluntary contributions of employers. Thus, it is not a typical “train or pay” instrument and it will very likely suffer from a lack of resources. This also signals a lack of support for tax incentives or levy based instruments in future discussions about fiscal stimulation of LLL.

The main instruments in support of professionalization courses, assessment of competences and e-learning so far are the ESF and LLP (in particular the Leonardo da Vinci programme). Slovakia also needs a new systemic instrument fostering access to CVET (see also statistics within the next paragraph “Comments on the statistical data”).

There has been no impact on CVET as a result of the financial crisis, except possibly on CVET within financial service organisations caused by decreasing profits. On the other hand and in contrast to that assumption, it is also possible that restructuring within the financial sector will lead to the need of further training, as cost saving measures and reorganisation may lead to the need to retrain staff for new tasks. There has been no official evidence about this or that so far. The economic crisis induced by the financial crisis and a steep decrease in the demand for Slovak’s main products has resulted in a marked increase in unemployment. Therefore, the Slovak government declared fighting unemployment a first priority and signalled support for employers suffering from low demand for their products caused by the crisis if they decide not to fire employees. This opens the window for training employees during the time originally envisaged for working.

Comments on the statistical data

Slovakia has one of the highest shares of VET trained population within initial formal training in the EU (e.g. 74 % of students in ISCED 3 vocational programmes in upper secondary education compared to 46 % in EU27 in 2006, according to Eurostat). At the same time, participation of adults in formal education is very low (0.8 % compared to 5.2 % of EU25 in population with ISCED 3 level of education and 2.9 % and 8.5 %, respectively, in ISCED 5-6 population, according to the LFS 2005 ad hoc module).

Table 37: Participation of 25-64 aged in formal education by attainment and working status (%)

	ISCED 3				ISCED 5+6			
	All	Empl	Unempl	Inact	All	Empl	Unempl	Inact
EU25	5.2	3.8	7	10.3	8.5	7.3	15.1	14.3
Slovakia	0.8	0.6	:	2.1	2.9	2.6	:	:

Source: Eurostat LLL ad hoc module LFS 2005 (reference year 2003)

Notes: : - Information not available; Empl – employed; Unempl - unemployed; Inact – inactive (e.g. attending educational institutions, retired, engaged in family duties, etc.)

Thus, regardless of the low total participation, which might be explained by a comparably high level of education/qualification amongst youth, Slovakia also suffers from the Matthew effect - an increase in a share of trainees with the education level, as visible from the table above. This is also a reason to rethink measures to boost interest in training among low-income individuals. There is also other data confirming the low participation in CVET. With 3.9 % and 3.3 % of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training in 2007 and 2008, respectively, Slovakia is far below the 2010 benchmark. Furthermore, Slovakia scored below the EU27 average (38 % and 49 %, respectively) in the share of enterprises providing CVET courses, according to data gathered within 2005 CVTS3. Very likely, a traditionally strong stream of initial VET causes insufficient awareness of the need for intervention in support of CVET.

5.2 Non-formal education

5.2.1 General background

Non-formal education is a comparably new term in scientific discourse in Slovakia. No currently valid legislation speaks about non-formal education. Just like the twin term “non-formal learning”, it has been more frequently used under the influence of European Union activities in particular since the consultation process to the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. Non-formal education was for the first time defined in the governmental policy document the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) as follows: “It takes place outside of the main pathways of education and vocational training and usually it is not concluded by the issue of an official document on achieving a qualification. It can be organised at schools apart from their main activity, in organisations, which were created for supplementing the programmes of education in the formal system, at workplaces, in interest organisations, etc.”

The newest definitions of non-formal education and non-formal learning in a governmental document stem quite typically from the proposal to implement EQF in the Slovak Republic responding to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council. In contrast to an earlier definition, the main objective of non-formal education has changed and the following is added: “to supplement, widen or deepen the knowledge, skills and competences of the individual”.

Within the currently valid Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (*Zákon č. 386/1997 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní a o zmene zákona Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky č. 387/1996 Z. z. o zamestnanosti*), the term “further education” subsumes diverse forms of education that are not formal (and even some segments of formal) without stressing classification and the differences among them in detail. In the draft act on LLL the term non-formal education is proposed for use. For the first time and in contrast to earlier understanding, non-formal education would in future be accomplished by acquiring a qualification, predominantly a partial qualification.

Non-formal education *sensu stricto* (i.e. personal demand driven and not leading to certification of education level or qualification) is in essence neither regulated nor supported by any financial scheme. Of course, as a consequence of hard market competition, providers promote their products by means which might be seen as a result of regulation. Providers for instance indicate their courses as accredited by the Ministry of Education, or individual trainers/lecturers announce that they are certified lecturers of the Slovak Association of Adult Education Institutions (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR*).

As non-formal education *sensu stricto* is regulated by market forces alone, there are diverse providers to be found; NGOs and small traders alongside strong, often international organisations. Despite lagging behind in using ICT in education in the 1990s and early 2000s, e-learning is on the increase as a consequence of improving connectivity and broad band availability.

Only two points hampering efforts to bring learning closer to learners are worth stressing – the lack of resources for learning among poor families, and the lack of access to information about the quality of respective courses which would allow them to distinguishing among the provision of education in terms of quality.

5.2.2 Major characteristics of non-formal CVET

Main institutions and providers

As already indicated, CVET and adult education are now seen as an integral part of lifelong education/learning, regardless of whether they refer to formal or non-formal setting. A major feature of non-formal CVET is that it is usually an ad hoc, short training aimed at the improvement of specific skills related to better performance at work. From this point of view the main providers are companies and/or training providers hired by companies. The main providers are registered at the Slovak Adult Education Institutions’ Association (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR*), promoted by diverse portals already mentioned in part 5.1.2, as it is not always possible to draw the line between pure formal and pure non-formal education providers.

The Institute of Educational Information and Planning (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) which maintains a list of CVET providers stemming from the registry of the Ministry of Interior (MV, *Ministerstvo vnútra*) addresses thousands of providers when collecting statistical data on an annual

basis. Although the number of private and non-state CVET providers has increased significantly in the 1990s, some of them do not offer CVET on a regular basis. The provision of training is not regulated, small traders and companies indicate training among their activities just to have a window of opportunity open for the future.

The largest of the non-state training institutions, and the only one with a regional network is the Academy of Education (AV, *Akadémia vzdelávania*) with centres in 38 cities. It originated from the privatisation of the largest adult education network of the former regime. Gradually there are more and more internationally recognised strong training providers on the market. An overview of courses and their providers can be gained from the portal www.education.sk.

There is no specific data on non-formal education as the only official data collection is conducted by ÚIPŠ based on the Act on Further Education, focused on “further education”, within which formal “further education” activities are also included.

Statute and main characteristics of the training provision in non-formal education

The statute of non-formal education is neither legislatively specified nor explicitly perceived by citizens. It is usually subsumed under the traditional terms *further education* or *adult education*.

Little is known about the explicit training provision of non-formal education. The statistical data available from the official “further education” data collecting instrument overlaps with formal education and at the same time it subsumes diverse (and essentially very different) kinds of non-formal education.

Table 38: Training programmes, trainees and graduates by type of training in 2008

Type of training activity	TP	%	Trainees	%	Graduates	%
Continuing professional training (specialising, refresher)	2 261	64.12	286 499	73.83	217 276	74.59
Training for attaining education level	173	4.91	6 939	1.79	6 098	2.09
Interest and civic education	635	18.01	41 002	10.57	22 648	7.78
Other	430	12.20	52 775	13.60	43 054	14.78
Not available (data missing)	27	0.77	834	0.21	2 202	0.76
Total	3 526	100	388 049	100	291 278	100

Source: ÚIPŠ

Note: TP - training programmes

Non-formal education *sensu stricto*, as mentioned above, is strongly demand driven and therefore flexible and does not adhere to formal programming regulations. It is usually perceived as “personal interest driven adult education”. No marketing studies are officially known, although providers definitely do some simple ad hoc research about this. Provision, registration procedures and prices are entirely down to the market or to the learning community (associations, NGOs, etc.). In the latter case education might be provided for free, indirectly covered by membership fees or from other income sources. All programming is subordinated to the ultimate goal, to attract individuals paying for education or contributing to the community mission.

Similar criteria apply to individually driven education aimed at the improvement of working skills for employment, or to the business where an individual perceives value added he or she has received as counting for more than the formal attributes of education or even a certificate.

There is also a segment of non-formal education moving towards voluntarily accepting diverse formal education regulations. This segment usually intends to offer diverse pre-qualification education and training that can improve knowledge, skills and competences required for respective qualifications. There is a discernible tendency towards the new act on LLL addressing this segment of non-formal education, and establishing institutions and mechanisms for accreditation. In recognising the existence of partial qualification this act might also stimulate non-formal education aimed at improvement of working skills, as a consequence of the possibility of getting recognised/validated non-formal/informal learning. No project aimed at paving the way to accreditation of non-formal and informal learning has been officially launched so far. The only experience already gathered is linked to international projects with Slovak participation, 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.

A very important part of non-formal education, which is however neither studied, nor explicitly statistically covered, is non-formal education/learning in companies usually driven by employer requirements. It might be very strictly regulated by internal measures without offering formal qualifications. Diverse in-company training or even on-the-job training is often even not perceived by participants as “education”, in particular due to the comparably short duration of the activity. Frequent short education/learning activities or many activities not perceived as education seem to be one of alternative explanations for the discrepancy in statistical data discussed below.

Statistical data, trends and possible impacts on education and training policies

The Eurostat LLL statistics depicts Slovakia among the poorest performing EU countries in the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training (3.7 % in 2003 and even 3.3 % in 2008, far below 2010 benchmark 12.5 %). In contrast to this, other 2003 data, stemming from 2005 LLL (LFS) ad hoc module shows Slovakia as performing above the EU25 average in non-formal education.

Table 39: Participation of 25-64 age group in non-formal education by attainment and working status (%)

	ISCED 2				ISCED 3+4				ISCED 5+6			
	All	Empl	Unempl	Inact	All	Empl	Unempl	Inact	All	Empl	Unempl	Inact
EU25	6.5	9	7.6	2.8	16.4	18.9	14.8	6.7	30.9	33.7	22.7	13
Slovakia	6.7	20.9	:	:	19.7	25.8	7.8	2.4	41.2	45.2	:	11.1

Source: Eurostat LLL ad hoc module LFS 2005 (reference year 2003)

Notes: : - Information not available; Empl – employed; Unempl - unemployed; Inact – inactive (e.g. attendants at educational institutions, retired, engaged in family duties, etc.)

Similar to the data on participation of the 25-64 age group in formal education from Table 37 (part 5.1.2), the Matthew effect is again visible: the share of trainees with education attainment levels is increasing from 6.7 % in ISCED 2 to 41.2 % in ISCED 5+6. In contrast to the data about formal education, however, the share of participants is much higher at all education attainment levels, in the total population data and employed trainees data even over the EU average.

Furthermore, other CVTS3 data indicates that the share of all employees trained in all enterprises is above the EU27 average (38 % and 33 %, respectively). All this might be seen by authorities as evidence of a reduced urgency for intervention.

On the other hand, the 2010 benchmark data is more carefully observed and a permanently low share of adult participants in education and training resulted in calls for urgent change: The Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) declared within its Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance adopted by the government on 25th April 2007 the aim of achieving improvements up to 15 % in 2015. Nevertheless, it will depend on fiscal incentives for individuals and SMEs, whether substantial improvement can be expected. Neither financial support of new investors and the pro-training attitude of large/rich companies, nor the ESF contributed to the increase of the number of trainees in the 2004-2008 period (4.3 %, 4.6 %, 4.1 %, 3.9 %, 3.3 %, respectively), according to the LLL Eurostat data.

It can be assumed that country inhabitants are much more positive towards learning than can be seen in the Eurostat LLL benchmark data. A detailed analysis of respective data is needed to identify the basis for further intervention.

5.3 Measures to help job seekers and people vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market

Unemployed people and other people vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market are served by employment services provided by the headquarters of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, *Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) and its network of offices spread throughout the country. Employment services are regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (*Zákon č. 5/2004 Z. z. o službách zamestnanosti*), as amended. This act also specifies disadvantaged job seekers, who are in detail identified by § 8(1) as follows:

- a. A citizen below 25 years of age, who has completed his/her systematic vocational preparation in full-time study courses less than two years ago and failed to acquire his/her first regularly paid employment (hereinafter referred to as “graduate”);
- b. A citizen older than 50 years;
- c. A citizen maintained on the register of job seekers for at least 12 months in the last 16 months (hereinafter referred to as “long-term unemployed citizen”);
- d. A citizen who did not perform any gainful activity, not even preparation for a profession in the framework of systematic vocational preparation or further education, for at least 24 months, due to an inability to harmonize duties at work with his/her parental obligations;
- e. A citizen, who is a parent, or a person, pursuant to a special regulation, who cares for three or more children, or a lone citizen caring for a child;
- f. A citizen who has lost the ability to carry out his/her current employment for health reasons and who is not a disabled citizen;
- g. A citizen moving or having moved within the territories of Member States of the European Union, or a citizen staying in the territory of a Member State of the European Union in order to carry out an employment;
- h. A disabled citizen;
- i. A citizen with reduced ability (minimum 20 %, maximum 40 %) to perform economic activity;
- j. An immigrant who has been granted asylum;
- k. A citizen unemployed due to diverse non-subjective reasons (e.g. organisational change, at risk of occupational disease, etc.);
- l. A citizen who has dropped out from secondary school;
- m. – o. A citizen with specific status in relation to penitentiary or other institutional care.

Focusing on active labour market policy (ALMP) as a vehicle for labour market assertion of disadvantaged groups is explicitly stressed in §11(1)d of this act. ALMP tools consist of three groups aimed at improving employability, creation of new jobs and retaining jobs, respectively. The respective tools, together with an indication of their volume in terms of numbers of affected people, are depicted in the table below, in which the new tools that were introduced in 2008 can also be seen.

Table 40: People affected or places created in 2004 – 2008 by ALMP tools corresponding to Act No. 5/2004

ALMP tools	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
§ 32	- *	- *	- *	- *	3 207
§ 43 (7)	- *	- *	- *	- *	524
§ 43 (10)	- *	- *	- *	- *	129
§ 43 (11)	- *	- *	- *	- *	5
§ 46	27 208	35 689	8 377	8 890	12 143
§ 47	0	64	1 228	12 537	13 863
§ 48b	- *	- *	- *	- *	1 693
§ 49	5 618	9 908	10 477	10 038	12 096
§ 49a	- *	- *	- *	- *	65
§ 50	1 778	3 087	3 490	2 550	1 016
§ 50a	- *	- *	- *	- *	820
§ 51	14 462	24 838	14 503	8 937	13 435
§ 52	219 876	137 446	218 071	257 299	166 630
§ 52a	- *	- *	- *	- *	16 599
§ 53	51	77	- *	- *	12 311
§ 53a	- *	- *	- *	- *	6
§ 54	- *	- *	- *	- *	8 227
§ 56	138	362	638	862	739
§ 56a	- *	- *	- *	- *	189
§ 57	107	271	405	389	337
§ 59	18	58	61	73	159
§ 60	0	2 731	2 793	2 674	6 592
§ 110	4 098	1 891	- *	- *	- *
Total	273 354	216 422	260 043	304 249	270 785

Source: UPSVaR

Notes: * not implemented

Indications of respective ALMP tools according to respective paragraph of the Act No 5/2004 Coll. as amended:

§ 32 – Mediating employment (in particular contribution to travel costs of job seeker related to entry interview with employer), § 43(7) Contribution to travel costs of job seekers related to attendance in activities focused on guidance and counselling services for job seekers, § 43(10) Payment of accommodation, meals and travel costs for job seekers/interested in change, attending activities focused on guidance and counselling services for job seekers that last more than three days,

§ 43(11) Contribution to services for families with children for job seekers/interested in change attending activities focused on guidance and counselling, § 46 Education and training for the labour market of the job seeker and person interested in employment, § 47 Education and training for the labour market of employee, § 48b Provision of benefits during training for the labour market and preparation for assertion at the labour market of disabled citizen, § 49 Contribution for self-employment, § 49a Contribution for adjusting to working conditions of disadvantaged job seeker, § 50 Contribution for employing a disadvantaged job seeker, § 50a Contribution to provide support in maintaining employees with low wages in jobs, § 51 Contribution for the graduate practice, § 52 Contribution for activation activity, § 52a Contribution for activation activities carried out through voluntary services, § 53 Contribution for commuting to work, § 53a Contribution for moving to work, § 54 Programmes and projects (focused on verification of newly implemented active labour market policy measures), § 56 Contribution for establishing and maintaining the sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace, § 56a Contribution for maintaining a disabled citizen in a job, § 57 Contribution for operating or performing self-employment to disabled citizens, § 59 Contribution for activities of the assistant at work, § 60 Contribution to cover operating costs of the sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace and employees' transport costs; § 110 of the older act on employment (387/1996 Coll.) subsidies for sheltered workshops and workplaces.

Employment services directly related to CVET are as follows:

- Education and training for the labour market (§ 46, § 47, § 51a);
- Contribution to the graduate practice (§ 51).

Education of job seekers and other persons interested in employment (§ 46) is an obligatory instrument; it means that all eligible applicants must be served. Disadvantaged groups are however given preference. Trainees are entitled to

- reimbursement of 100 % of the costs related to training for the labour market (meals, accommodation, travel costs);
- contribution for services for families with children during the training period, since May 2008 SKK 1 300 per month for one child and SKK 1 000 for every additional child (since January 2009 it is EUR 43.16 and EUR 33.20, respectively);
- benefit during the training period provided that the training for the labour market lasts over one month (benefit equals to subsistence minimum for one adult person, since July 2008 SKK 5 390 (since January 2009 it is EUR 178.92).

In contrast to the previous measure, Education and training for the labour market of employee (§ 47) is not an obligatory instrument. A contribution may be provided to the employer for the reimbursement of training costs for training according to legislatively specified intensity in the percentage of eligible expenditures (e.g. lecturer costs, travel and accommodation costs for participants, counselling, training consumables, project equipment depreciation)

- 25 % in case of specific training;
- 60 % in case of general training increased by 10 % in case of a disadvantaged group and by 10 % in case of SMEs.

Thus, the maximum reimbursement intensity is 80 % and the maximum contribution for one employer and one project is SKK 1 000 000 since May 2008 (EUR 33 193.91 since January 2009).

A new instrument, the Contribution to support employment of persons that complete education and training for the labour market (§ 51a) is envisaged for 2009, according to the 2008 amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll., intended for the employment of secondary school graduates registered with the registry of job seekers for at least six months, and citizens over 50 years of age registered with the registry of job seekers for at least three months. The contribution to employers employing a job seeker for 24 months depends on the unemployment rate in a respective region, the status of the employer and status of the job seeker. In this way, a non-profit organisation in a region with an above national average unemployment rate can receive a maximum contribution of EUR 4 247.15 for the employment of long-term disadvantaged job seekers, while a minimum contribution of EUR 1 133 exists in the Bratislava Region for a for-profit organisation employing a regular job seeker.

In 2008 labour offices received 19 233 applications from job seekers and those interested in job change for entering education and training for the labour market activities. There were 12 004 job seekers and 97 interested in change placed, which represents 62.9 % of submitted applications. 12 037 people completed education and training for the labour market activities (11 941 job seekers and 96 interested in change). Courses with the highest number of trainees were focused on ICT – 2 218, business and services – 2 094, diverse blue-collar occupations – 1 708. A specific category was the training for self-employment, assisting *inter alia* in the preparation of a business plan for those unemployed wishing to qualify for § 49 instrument and receive a contribution for self-employment allowing the covering of their initial costs to run a new business. In 2008, there were 2 000 people trained for self-employment.

Retraining activities are certified according to Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (*Zákon č. 386/1997 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní*) presenting the title/content of the course, without, however, the obligatory indication of the respective education branch according to the national classification, or the specific indication of newly acquired or improved skills. E.g. in 2008, 924 people retrained in accountancy improved their skills in the area. However this does not mean that they are qualified for such a profession. Improvement is expected from the new act on LLL allowing for recognition of partial qualifications. Other educational activities were also planned, aimed at completing education in order to attain the educational level (basic education, secondary education). This kind of training was however just marginal (within second chance school experimental projects) and not mainstreamed, although low educated people are disproportionally represented among the unemployed. In 2008, there were 92.2 thousand job seekers with ISCED 0-1 educational level out of the total 230 433 job seekers, which is 37.09 %. In contrast to this, and for comparison, there were 99.0 thousand 15year old and older inhabitants with ISCED 0-1 level of education, according to LFS 2Q data of the Statistical Office (ŠÚ, *Štatistický úrad*), representing only 2.2 % of the total population in the respective age group.

Contribution for graduate practice (§ 51) is an obligatory instrument, thus all eligible applicants must be served. A school graduate, up to 25 years of age, not more than 2 years after completing school and not having entered employment, and registered as unemployed for at least 3 months is eligible for this measure.

The graduate practice is aimed at acquiring vocational skills and practical experience at the employer's workplace in order to expand graduates' possibilities for assimilation into the labour market. Within the graduate practice a graduate works up to 20 hours weekly for a period of up to six months, without the possibility of prolonging it or of participating in it repeatedly. Based on the contract between a labour office and a graduate, school graduates originally received a contribution of SKK 1 500 (about EUR 50 according to the conversion rate EUR 1 = SKK 30.1260), since 2008 the contribution has been expanded to the minimum subsistence level provided to one adult person according to Act No. 601/2003 Coll. on subsistence minimum (*Zákon č. 601/2003 Z. z. o životnom minime*), which was SKK 5 390 and since 1st January 2009 EUR 178.92 per month. The graduate practice is considered an advantage for participants as it improves their skills. However, it is not certified by any special certification indicating the skills improved.

§ 54 (Projects and programmes) encompasses the verification of newly implemented active labour market policy measures and any other specific instruments. Within the ESF Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources, there were 5 086 job seekers, and 81 interested in job change placed in education and training for labour market activities. 4 784 job seekers and 70 interested in job change completed them. The highest number of activities were focused on blue-collar occupations; in total 2 698 people were placed in these activities and 2 500 completed them. Within the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3, activities within the education and training for the labour market focused on blue-collar occupations and security services were carried out for 198 job seekers and 1 interested in job change, and 187 job seekers and 1 interested in job change completed them. Furthermore, § 54 measures include *inter alia* individual state aid to investors approved by the government or the European Commission and provided by the ÚPSVaR to contribute to the creation of new jobs. The state aid explicitly specifies a contribution for training of newly recruited staff for these jobs.

Employment services focus dominantly on assistance for job seekers and partly for those interested in job change, and as a consequence of the economic crisis also on employed people at risk of dismissal. Although the disadvantaged groups the employment services focus on (according to the act on employment) are identical to the vulnerable groups with regard to social exclusion, they are not specifically served unless they are unemployed or at risk of dismissal. There are no direct links between CVET and serving this kind of disadvantaged groups. The most detailed information is available on CVET for the unemployed.

Statistical data on education and training financed by the ESF is available corresponding to the SOP Human Resources and serving the territory of Slovakia, except the Bratislava Region, and the SPD NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 serving the Bratislava Region. In 2008, in aggregate there were 17 207 job seekers and 177 interested in job change placed in training. 16 901 job seekers and 166 interested in job change completed training, out of which 12.13 % job seekers and 14.45 % interested in job change were placed in jobs up to one month after completing training and 32.96 % job seekers and 25.30 % interested in job change up to three months after competing training.

The numbers of trained people varied in respective years depending on the availability of means from the state budget and from the ESF. Table 40 above indicates (see lines § 46 and § 47) a dramatic increase in numbers of trained employed people in 2007 and a further increase in trainees among unemployed and employed at risk of dismissal in 2009 caused by the reallocation of unused resources from other ESF measures.

The table below indicates that the numbers of unemployed in CVET are below the EU27 average although unemployment rates in Slovakia are among the highest in the EU over the long term.

Table 41: Participation rate of unemployed in education and training in 2007 (%)

	Formal and non-formal education	Formal education	Non-formal education
EU27	24.5	6.3	20.4
Slovakia	15.7	4.6	12.1

Source: Eurostat; Adult Education Survey

The 2007 data is unique as it stems from the specialised adult education survey, and due to the comparably high numbers of unemployed in training as a result of the availability of resources. A downward future trend in the proportion of trainees is expected due to other priorities in the allocation of ESF resources, and due to the increase in unemployment. Furthermore, funding active labour market policies might be endangered by the increased need to cover unemployment benefits which are expected to increase dramatically in 2009 and 2010 (see also data on unemployment in part 1.3 and in tables in the [annex](#)).

6. Training VET teachers and trainers

6.1 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

6.1.1 Teaching and training occupations in VET

The Measure of the Statistical Office No. 16/2001 Coll. on the Classification of Occupations (*Opatrenie Štatistického úradu č. 16/2001 Z. z., ktorým sa vyhlasuje Klasifikácia zamestnaní*) sets an ISCO reflecting the national classification KZAM-R. Within this measure 2 groups are of relevance – category No. 23 Professional Pedagogical Staff (*odborní pedagogickí zamestnanci*) and category No. 33 Pedagogical Staff (*pedagogickí zamestnanci*). The former category is divided into 5 groups and 17 sub-groups comprising a total of 81 occupations including teachers at all types of schools; the latter is divided into 4 groups and 9 sub-groups comprising a total of 42 occupations including trainers in formal education, tutors, instructors, and trainers in continuing education.

In IVET, the legal status of teacher and trainer occupations depends on their relation to educational institutions. Those in VET schools and establishments were called pedagogical staff by law (§ 50 of the School Act No. 29/1984 Coll. (*Zákon č. 29/1984 Zb. o sústave základných a stredných škôl (školský zákon)*)) valid till September 2008, and specified as teachers, trainers, tutors and sport instructors. Nevertheless, the new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll., in force since 1st September 2008, paved the way for a specialised act on pedagogical staff. This came into force in November 2009. Thus, the 2008/2009 school year is the last year of traditional classification. Types of teachers and trainers in the IVET system are presented in Table 42, in part 6.2.1.

In CVET, there is a boom of new professions that have not yet been even listed in the KZAM-R (e.g. related to coaching of top level professionals) usually subsumed under the umbrella of trainers. Types of trainers in CVET are presented in Table 44, in part 6.3.1.

Status of VET teachers and VET trainers

Within the secondary IVET system, VET teachers and VET trainers are recognised equally as pedagogical staff by educational legislation and their qualification requirements are strictly regulated (until October 2009 by the Decree of the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) and since November 2009 by a specific act on pedagogical staff). Nevertheless, very likely due to the influence of the general education system of which the VET system is often considered a derivation, trainers are paid less attention than teachers. This can be seen in government regulations as well as from the training possibilities offered by the public sector. The situation can be changed by a revival of guilds and professional associations that have started to take an interest in the continuing professional development of trainers, but are often short on human and financial resources. As IVET is dominantly school based, teachers and trainers are often placed in the same venue.

Similarly, there is no difference between general education teachers and VET teachers according to legislation. Nevertheless, general subject teachers seem to have a clear indication of their preference for working positions. This preference is increasing from positions in ISCED 3C training branches to ISCED 3A study branches with practical training (both originally within former secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*)), ISCED 3A study branches with practice at secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*) and finally to study branches at grammar schools (G, *gymnázium*). It is caused by the reduced amount of room for these kinds of subjects in VET in contrast to general education and also due to the lower interest of VET students in academic pursuits. On the other hand, VET teachers and in particular teachers of important VET subjects at VET schools with a long-standing reputation for providing quality education are undoubtedly enjoying a high status.

A contradiction with regard to the status of IVET teachers (and partly also trainers) must be, however, mentioned. The deterioration of salaries in comparison to other professions and increasing demand in particular as a result of the worsening, very stressful environment in schools, make this profession unattractive, regardless whether it is about VET schools or grammar schools. The ageing of teachers and trainers, together with negative selection of young professionals (brain drain to other sectors) has developed into a serious problem. Although secondary school teachers and trainers are not seen as attractive professions by young professionals, the teaching profession (making not substantial difference between teachers and trainers in schools) is still seen positively and enjoys a high public status, according to sociological surveys. Similarly, higher education teachers are seen positively. However

young people are attracted by the freedom at HEI and the opportunities to earn additional means from additional activities rather than by the profession itself. In contrast to IVET, CVET trainers - in particular those acting in a free market - consider this profession attractive, undoubtedly due to both the freedom and the better earning opportunities compared to IVET.

6.1.2 Responsible bodies

The responsibility for initial training of VET teachers and trainers is with the training providers; however the qualification is strictly regulated by the Decree of Ministry of Education No. 41/1996 Coll. on Professional and Educational Competence of the Educational Staff (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva č. 41/1996 Z. z. o odbornej a pedagogickej spôsobilosti pedagogických zamestnancov*).

In-service training for IVET teachers is regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 42/1996 Coll. on the In-service Training of the Pedagogical Staff (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 42/1996 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní pedagogických pracovníkov*).

Higher education institutions are the only institutions awarding qualifications to IVET teachers. Their training is accredited by the Accreditation Commission (*AK, Akreditačná komisia*) established by the government as its advisory body.

The assessing, awarding and accrediting of formal qualifications for IVET trainers in VET schools and school establishments are fully regulated by the Ministry of Education.

There has been no system for monitoring training relevance introduced in Slovakia. So far, the accreditation processes of all kinds have been exclusively input based. No national quality assurance model has been introduced yet, either.

There are no official regulations applied concerning CVET trainers (lecturers) on the free market unless self-imposed by the respective professional association. Certification of adult education trainers based on training offered by the Slovak Association of Adult Education Providers (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR*) is not obligatory; however, gaining gradually more importance. Being listed at the AIVD website as a certified lecturer is considered a signal of quality by clients.

6.1.3 Recent reforms to VET teacher/trainer training

For a long period, reforms of teacher training were predominantly bottom-up driven, and substantially influenced by the pressure of 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. Furthermore, a dispute emerged concerning a dominant model in the preparation of VET teachers. In contrast to genuine teacher training programmes, it is possible to gain a qualification through the completion of non-teacher training higher education studies complemented by a specific “pedagogy” programme (so-called complementary pedagogical study (DPŠ, *doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium*)). Complementary pedagogical studies were labelled as an outdated model and insufficient for proper acquiring “pedagogic skills”, initially introduced due to the lack of qualified VET teachers. Specialised teacher training programmes were marked as the only appropriate model. As a consequence, universities of technology and economics started to develop specialised teacher training programmes and have redesigned their complementary pedagogical studies.

It is worth mentioning, that VET teacher training providers led by the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava (STU, *Slovenská technická univerzita v Bratislave*) developed VET teacher standards with regard to pedagogical competences: graduates from teacher training in pedagogy must comply with 6 complex standards, represented by 40 indicators with explicitly set proofs. There have been no similar standards set for trainer training.

Another important impulse came from the Bologna process and a subsequent reform of study programmes. All higher education institutions have redesigned their programmes according to the Bologna process, which also contributed to the emergence of new programmes – bachelor studies for trainers.

There are three important top down changes affecting teachers and trainers in secondary IVET.

Since 2005, a school leaving examination reform has been in progress. This reform is substantially accompanied by retraining of pedagogical staff supported by the ESF. The National Institute for

Education (ŠPÚ, *Štátny pedagogický ústav*) and the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV, *Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*) retrained teachers to enable them to adapt to organisational changes and to new examination related requirements, like the identification of appropriate exam topics and their translation into relevant tasks. In case of vocational subject teachers special attention was paid to the development of comprehensive, interlinked topics for both the theoretical and the practical part of the exam.

Since September 2008, as a consequence of decentralisation of curricular development, schools must prepare school educational programmes. Therefore, two national projects with the same title “Teacher Training for the Creation of School Education Programmes” and similar goals were set within the ESF Operational Programme Education Priority Axis “Reform of education and training” and Priority Axis “Modern education for the knowledge society for the Bratislava region”.

Furthermore, within the same ESF priority axes, two specialised national projects of the “Development of New Educational Programme in VET for Automotive Industry II” are in the process of preparation. They are focusing on the training of staff to improve curriculum development (school educational programmes elaboration) by schools preparing workers for the automotive industry.

The most important top down policy reform concerns professional definition and consequently 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 (*Návrh metodiky tvorby profesijných štandardov jednotlivých kategórií pedagogických zamestnancov*). The proposal reflects “Education and Training 2010” goals as well as the work of the European Commission Working Group B. Furthermore, a Draft Concept Paper for the Professional Development of Teachers in a Career System (*Koncepcia profesijného rozvoja učiteľov v kariérovom systéme*) was elaborated and was approved by the government on 18th April 2007. A new act on pedagogical staff coming into force in 2009 sets the following categories of pedagogical staff: teacher, trainer, tutor, pedagogical assistant, foreign lector, trainer of sport school or sport class, and “*répétiteur*”. Additionally, it sets 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 continuous 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 certification;
- pedagogue with the second attestation or professional with the second certification;

and two specific career positions:

- pedagogue specialist or professional worker specialist;
- leading pedagogue/manager or leading professional worker.

The act introduces the credit system for standards driven continuing training. Accreditation of continuing training programmes should be carried out by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff (*Akreditačná rada Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky pre kontinuálne vzdelávanie pedagogického zamestnanca a odborného zamestnanca*) that should be established as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education.

6.2 Types of teachers and trainers in IVET

6.2.1 Types of teachers, trainers and training facilitators in IVET

Secondary IVET is dominantly school based and there is no genuine apprenticeship system in Slovakia. Even when practical training is offered outside school facilities, the education sector regulation must be respected and the dominant partner finally responsible for practical training is the school and not the contracting partner offering workshops or workplace for the training of students. Thus, IVET staff is dominantly bound to the education institution.

Table 42: Type of VET teachers and trainers in the IVET system

Type	Place of teaching/ training	Curriculum development	Assessment
Teacher of general subjects	school	limited autonomy*	Ministry of Education (MŠ, <i>Ministerstvo školstva</i>)
Teacher of vocational subjects	secondary specialised schools SOŠ	limited autonomy*	MŠ
Teacher of practical training	school, workplace	limited autonomy*	MŠ
Tutors	school, dormitory, specialised out-of-school facility	limited autonomy*	MŠ
Trainer at educational establishments of educational authorities	school, centre (SOP, SPV), workplace	limited autonomy*	MŠ
Trainer at educational establishments of companies	centre (SPV at companies), workplace	limited autonomy*	MŠ, Company
Instructors	workplace	limited autonomy*	MŠ
Higher education (university) teacher	higher education institution	full autonomy	Accreditation Commission (AK, <i>Akreditačná komisia</i>)

Notes: * expanding since September 2008 in case of first classes of secondary schools; curriculum development decentralisation results in designing individual school educational programme, within which cooperation of pedagogical staff is envisaged.

SOŠ - secondary specialised school (*stredná odborná škola*), SOP - centre of vocational practice (*stredisko odbornej praxe*), SPV - centre of practical training (*stredisko praktického vyučovania*)

There are traditionally three categories of VET school teachers officially recognised by the education sector legislation: teachers of general subjects, teachers of vocational subjects and teachers of practical training. The latter category of teachers is involved in practical lessons at school, e.g. in laboratories and practical lessons connected to workplaces specified within the curricula and aimed at applying theoretical knowledge gained during theoretical subjects.

Trainers are responsible for assisting in gaining respective skills (predominantly manual) during practical training. Although VET in Slovakia is dominantly school-based, in some cases practical training is offered outside the school. The first option comprises centres of practical training (SPV, *stredisko praktického vyučovania*), originally aiming at the practical training of students of former secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*), and since 2008 September training branches of secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*), and centres of vocational practice (SOP, *stredisko odbornej praxe*) originally aimed at the practical training of students of secondary specialised schools.

Based on an agreement between a school and a company, practical training can be provided directly by the company in its own premises and by its own staff, but under the supervision of the school. These professionals are often called instructors to differentiate between them and trainers from schools.

Tutors serve students residing at affiliated dormitories and take care of diverse aspects of the students' personal interest.

Sport instructors are in fact specialists at schools dedicated to the education of students who are at the same time (pre)professional sportsmen and sportswomen.

Since September 2008 with the coming into force of the new Education Act, curriculum development has been decentralised (see e.g. part 3.2 and 4.3). Till September 2008 teachers and trainers had the right to change curricula, to influence profiles of programmes, and subsequently the qualifications of graduates, and they did so, however only within the limits of official documents. The Ministry of Education approved all curricula; in the case of VET, they were finalised under the supervision of sectoral expert commissions affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV, *Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*). Nevertheless, 10 % of weekly instruction hours and up to 30 % of the subjects' content were able to be changed by schools. Schools interested in more extensive innovations

had to submit a project for approval and comply with the procedure regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 376/2005 Coll.

Teachers and trainers have full freedom in deciding on “pedagogical” tools. Their repertoire is based on their training and peer learning. Pedagogical skills should be improved and enhanced by the Methodological – Pedagogical Centre (MPC, *Metodicko-pedagogické centrum*) with five regional in-service training branches and ŠIOV. Since 2009 teachers and trainers will be expected to earn credits in order to progress in their career path.

In the higher education segment, holding a PhD is the minimum requirement for considering a teacher to be qualified. Schools are financially punished having teachers without PhDs as they do not receive full remuneration for teachers without a PhD within the contract with the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the Accreditation Commission started to carry out a “comprehensive accreditation of activities of higher education institutions” (according to § 84 of Higher Education Act). Within this process numbers of professors and associate professors will be taken into account together with other already agreed criteria for reclassification of higher education into universities and two categories of non-university higher education institutions. Out of 20 assessed public universities twelve universities fail to meet university status accreditation requirements. They were given a one-year period to eliminate their shortcomings. It is expected that three additional institutions will meet the requirements and that in total 11 higher education institutions will be recognised as universities in the 2010/2011 academic year, gaining the right to offer all three cycles of study. The rest of the 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.

6.2.2 Pre-service and in-service training of IVET teachers and trainers

All secondary teachers must be graduates of higher education institutions. Teachers of general subjects are prepared at universities within teacher training programmes designed for all types of schools, usually in two fields corresponding to respective subjects (e.g. Mathematics and Physics). There is no specific initial training for teachers of general subjects at VET schools. They adjust to VET schools demands within the first years of service, assisted by appointed experienced colleagues.

Teachers of vocational subjects at VET schools are usually graduates from technical universities (with an Engineer’s degree - Ing.) and from specific complementary pedagogical study (DPŠ, *doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium*) offered at universities for those interested in teaching careers. This study is aimed at the full provision of training in “pedagogy”. There is no specific initial training for teachers of vocational subjects differentiating between the needs of ISCED 3A and ISCED 3C programmes. Although students of secondary specialised schools are as a rule more academically oriented than students of previous secondary vocational schools, no specific training in pedagogy is offered.

Teachers of vocational subjects can also be graduates from teacher training programmes at universities with priorities other than teacher training (e.g. University of Economics), but it is very rare.

Trainers and other learning facilitators at VET schools must also fulfil the minimum requirements of the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 41/1996 Coll. on Professional and Educational Competence of the Educational Staff (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva č. 41/1996 Z. z. o odbornej a pedagogickej spôsobilosti pedagogických zamestnancov*), otherwise they are considered unqualified and paid less than qualified staff. Usually graduation from the relevant secondary school and complementary pedagogical studies are required¹².

In-service training for IVET teachers was regulated by the Decree of Ministry of Education No. 42/1996 Coll. on the In-service Training of the Pedagogical Staff (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 42/1996 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní pedagogických pracovníkov*). The officially recognised forms of in-service training valid till September 2009 were as follows¹³:

¹² For further details about qualification requirements and training alternatives valid only till September 2009 see part 0602 in Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008.

¹³ For detailed description see part 0602 of Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008.

- introduction of new teachers to practice;
- refresher work (*priebežné vzdelávanie*);
- specialised innovative study (*ŠIŠ, špecializačné inovačné štúdium*);
- specialised qualification study (*špecializačné kvalifikačné štúdium*);
- training in leadership (*príprava vedúcich pedagogických pracovníkov*);
- extended study (*rozširujúce štúdium*).

There was no specific guidance available to advise IVET staff on how to improve their skills, as there was no real pressure to improve skills, except the intrinsic motivation of staff themselves. No official quality assurance system has been introduced; as a rule, it was up to the director of the school and the school establishment to monitor the quality of service as well as to arrange for guidance on improving staff skills.

The new act on pedagogical staff, coming into force from November 2009, and introducing a credit based and standards driven continuing development model should improve this. The following table depicts the new scheme influencing in-service training expected since 2009. Respective categories of pedagogical staff: teacher; trainer; tutor; pedagogical assistant; foreign lecturer; trainer of sport school or sport class, and “*répétiteur*”, in 4 career levels in diverse career paths are to be trained.

Table 43: Continuing professional development model (2007 concept paper, 2009 act)

Career levels	Basic path (No specialisation)	Specialisation paths	
4 th level		↑	2 nd Attest holder ↑
3 rd level	↑	1 st Attest holder ↑	⇒
2 nd level	Independent ↑	⇒	
1 st level - Beginner	⇒		

Notes: ↑ ⇒ credit gathering ↑ upgrading after exam and credits assessments against a set of standards
Specialisation paths: Subject matter expert; Pedagogue-specialist; Leader/ Manager

6.3 Types of teachers and trainers in CVET

6.3.1 Types of teachers, trainers and training facilitators in CVET

It is not appropriate to differentiate between teachers and trainers in CVET in Slovakia. CVET professionals are usually called lecturers, regardless of the content of their education or training and their status; and sometimes, in particular when training affects practical skills, instructors. The terms *teacher* and *trainer* are related rather to the initial formal education system. It would be possible to offer classification with many sub-categories, however, any detailed classification is vulnerable as there are no strict legal regulations, except for the aforementioned national classification of occupations (KZAM, *klasifikácia zamestnaní*) used for statistical purposes rather than in daily life. Many professionals prefer their own classifications (e.g. coaches usually prefer not to be seen as trainers and even not counsellors). Similarly, many professionals prefer to be named lecturers and alternatively the category of professional trainers could have been labelled as a category of lecturers.

Table 44: Types of trainers in CVET

Type	Place of teaching/ training	Curriculum development	Assessment
Obligatory CPD* trainer/ facilitator	educational establishment	limited autonomy	respective authority**
Adult education trainer	educational establishment, facilities leased by provider	full autonomy	provider (could be based on feedback from client)
Professional trainer	based on agreement with respective company/institution/individual	full autonomy	provider/client
Trainer at companies/institutions	company, training facilities of company	full autonomy	company
Professional instructor	based on agreement with respective company/institution, usually at workplace	full autonomy	provider/client

Notes: * continuing professional development; e.g. in-service training of teachers

** Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*), in case of pedagogical staff; Ministry of Health (MZ, *Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*) and respective professional associations in case of medical staff, etc.

Lecturers are predominantly professionals of diverse occupations who are contracted for CVET by training providers or directly by institutions interested in training for their employees. Thus, lecturing is often a job rather than an occupation. The level of education of lecturers from 520 positively responding organizations within regular annual data collection done by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) can be seen from the following table.

Table 45: Lecturers in continuing training in 2008

Lecturers	Internal	External	Total	Of which women
Trained (ISCED 3C)	73	333	406	183
of which with pedagogical qualification	48	68	116	46
with pedagogical qualification (in %)	65.8	20.4	28.6	25.1
Secondary educated (ISCED 3A)	291	1 231	1 522	844
of which with pedagogical qualification	162	498	660	387
with pedagogical qualification (in %)	55.7	40.5	43.4	45.9
Tertiary educated	3 561	9 262	12 823	7 030
of which with pedagogical qualification	2 555	4 590	7 145	4 087
with pedagogical qualification (in %)	71.7	49.6	55.7	58.1
Total	3 925	10 826	14 751	8 057
of which with pedagogical qualification	2 765	5 156	7 921	4 520
with pedagogical qualification (in %)	70.4	47.6	53.7	56.1

Source: ÚIPŠ

6.3.2 Pre-service and in-service training of CVET teachers and trainers

Pre-service (initial) training

Continuing training education is not a regulated trade and thus no evidence of professional qualification is needed for setting up an educational institution, and a certificate of lecturing (pedagogical or andragogical) competence is not required by law. Although professional competence is required, the criteria and the value of certificates for proving professional competence have not been set. Submitting proof of professional competence is required consistently only in some specific cases, such as training in the field of occupational safety, fire protection, arts, healthcare, where such proof must be submitted in accordance with regulations stated by the Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. (*Živnostenský zákon č. 455/1991 Zb.*) or sectoral legislation (e.g. Act No. 124/2006 Coll. on Occupational Safety (*Zákon č. 124/2006 Z. z. o bezpečnosti a ochrane zdravia pri práci*), Act No. 125/2006 Coll. on Labour Inspection (*Zákon č. 125/2006 Z. z. o inšpekciu práce*), the Act No. 93/2005 Coll. on Driving Schools (*Zákon č. 93/2005 Z. z. o autoškolách*)). In such cases a certificate of lecturing competence (the so-

called lecturing minimum) is also usually required. Thus, lecturers in the field of blue-collar professions, who generally have only secondary education, often complete complementary pedagogical study (DPŠ, *doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium*) pursuant to such a sectoral legislation or based on their own initiative. DPŠ is however originally designed for trainers in formal IVET, thus it is a substitution for a genuine training in pedagogy.

While teachers from basic schools and secondary schools receive full qualification just after completing training in pedagogy and psychology, this kind of training is not required from higher education teachers. A great number of lecturers in continuing education are from this group. As a consequence, due to insufficient training in methodology and psychology, lecturers recruited from the group of higher education teachers and practitioners do not know how to adapt their style of instruction to adults.

Thus, systematic initial training for lecturers does not exist, neither is it officially required from lecturers. Courses have been developed to improve lecturer skills (e.g. by the Slovak Association of Adult Education Institutions (AIVD, *Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR*), see the next paragraphs) however, educational institutions usually do not require a certificate on completion of training for lecturers.

In-service (continuing) training

Systematic in-service training for CVET trainers and other learning facilitators does not exist and continuing training is not officially required from a lecturer. In-service training of internal lecturers may be set by individual training providers or companies in accordance with their training culture; however, there is no official evidence nor impact surveys about these activities.

Nevertheless, a paid certified course for lecturers was developed and is offered by the AIVD to all those interested in improving their lecturing skills. Output requirements of the certification course for lecturers provided by the AIVD include mastery of adult education theory; a video taped lecture which is subjected to performance analysis; and a final paper in the form of the lecturer's course design and/or manual. The list of certified lecturers is maintained by the association and displayed at the association's website with an expected comparable advantage in the market for graduates.

It is often hardly possible to label existing fragments of training as pre-service or in-service training. In fact, courses on lecturing could be considered the latter or the former depending on the status of participants, i.e., novice or lecturer already in-service.

As already explained pre-service and in-service training of CVET teachers and trainers is substantially less regulated than training of IVET teachers and trainers. There is no quality assurance system developed and any quality improvement is based on initiatives by market players only.

The assessment of lecturers is performed based on inquiries after completing an educational/training activity and usually does not have any impact on the lecturer's formal career. The lecturers' career path is fully his/her business, influencing and influenced by the demand for their services and the honorarium. The career path of an internal lecturer fully depends on the training provider, or company, where he/she is internally employed to provide training of employees.

With rising competitiveness in the market, efforts to establish quality control and quality self-regulation became a subject of discussion *inter alia* within discussions about a new act on LLL. It was intended to set certification of lecturers as an obligatory requirement by a group working on the act, it is however heavily disputed. An unofficial system for certification of lecturers developed by the AIVD seems to remain unofficial, similarly with their quality management recommendations.

7. Matching VET provision with labour market needs

7.1 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

There is no genuine system and there are no reliable mechanisms developed for the anticipation of skills needs. There is no reliable data about occupations and labour force with respective education levels available nation-wide. There is only sectoral data or regional data, collected ad-hoc, usually without tradition and without the gradual strengthening of methodology. In recognition of this systemic weakness, its negative influence on designing VET programmes, and in the light of the lack of research in this field the sub-measure 3.3.B “Systems for linking vocational education and training with the labour market” was set within the 2004-2006 ESF SOP Human Resources. There were 10 surveys of labour market needs, 20 studies on key occupations and establishment of a functional electronic system of mapping labour market needs envisaged. Nevertheless, the appropriate measures were not finally carried out and the reserved funds were reallocated for other activities.

The 2004-2007 ESF project Creation, Development and Implementation of an Open System of Lifelong Learning in the SR for the Labour Market included among its objectives “creating and implementing a system for monitoring, research and design of educational needs, derived from technologies applied in individual sectors of the economy“. In contrast to original expectations the project contributed to the identification of future policies and recommendations concerning further research in the field rather than to the development of relevant know-how. In fact, in both cases the divergence from the initial plans must be noted. This happened partly due to the lack of research capacity and expertise. While it is understandable that there was no experience in this field before 1989 it is not understandable why research capacities had not been created.

There were two relevant institutions in the former federal Czechoslovakia, the institute leading research in VET in Prague and the institute leading research in labour issues in Bratislava, both with federal responsibility. After the division of Czechoslovakia research capacities, lacking in Slovakia in VET within the newly established State Institute of Vocational Education (*ŠIOV, Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*) were only partly developed and research capacities within the former Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (*VÚPSVaR, Výskumný ústav práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) gradually diminished.

Nevertheless, both aforementioned institutes conducted surveys at the request of their ministries as a consequence of the dissatisfaction of businesses with the labour market supply from schools. A survey carried out by ŠIOV focused “on key knowledge, skills and competences of future graduates of secondary VET schools” and therefore its 2007 “Sectoral Analysis of Employers’ Needs and Graduates’ Readiness to Enter the Labour Market in the Slovak Republic” was limited only to secondary IVET graduates.

The Institute for Labour and Family Studies (*IVPR, Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny*) conducted a sociological employer survey “Analysis of Skills Need and Structure of Labour Supply Skills at the Regional Labour Market and Draft of Regional Employment Policy Measures” (with a sample of 260 entities) to study vacancies and the mismatch between requirements of employers and offer of job seekers. The analysis was dominantly aimed at the identification of the lack of qualifications and occupations according to ISCO and only partly at the identification of skills and competences.

In contrast to these two ad hoc studies, the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (*ÚIPŠ, Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) worked out an analysis of integration of graduates into labour market on annual basis. This analysis was however based on registered unemployed data and therefore could not offer an unbiased picture. It did not reflect graduates not registered with labour offices and disregarded from mismatch between studies and occupations accepted by graduates, and also over-qualification.

A very strong impulse for the anticipation of skills needs and in particular the anticipation of occupations required came in the mid 2000s as a consequence of the decrease in unemployment. After a long period of drawing from the army of unemployed there was suddenly a shortage of labour. Following the automotive industry, which was the first to indicate its labour force needs, other sectoral representatives also started to collect data on estimated needs. In 2008 the Business Alliance of Slovakia (*PAS, Podnikateľská aliancia Slovenska*) in cooperation with the organisation Uni2010 composed of experts from business practice and university experts, conducted the qualitative research “Professions 2010-2020” in order to identify professions most required by the labour market in 2010-2020. This

project reflects a topical priority of PAS for 2008 to contribute to the linking of education with labour market needs.

At the same time also self-governing regions, since 2002 responsible for regional VET, started to collect data in order to align regional VET with regional labour market needs.

Nevertheless, all the aforementioned surveys were limited by specific focus corresponding to respective sectoral fields of interest and without efforts to develop instruments to be used periodically to monitor labour market supply and demand, in order to offer reliable data for the anticipation of skill needs. The Skillsnet project of Cedefop is therefore crucial for Slovakia in the hope that the experience gained from this project can assist in the revitalisation of research in this field in Slovakia.

7.2 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs

As explained in the previous chapter, there are no genuine instruments available to identify labour market needs with a direct impact on matching VET provision with skill needs. Nevertheless, increasing interest in the identification of labour market needs, recently emerged, fuelled by employers' dissatisfaction with graduate supply and manifested by diverse (often non-standard and/or particular) activities should hopefully translate into systemic surveying based on valid and reliable measuring. As already mentioned in part 2.1.1, the Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní*) coming into force in 2009 stipulates the responsibility for the identification of labour market needs. Self-governing regions have to work out regional strategies in cooperation with Regional VET Councils composed of representatives of state administration, self-governing administration, employers and representatives of trade unions and/or employees' councils. A plan of labour market learning needs (an obligatory document required by law) must be adopted by self-governing regions. It should be elaborated by respective professional organisations of employers and submitted to the Regional VET Council and national VET Council for comment, with a final say of the self-governing region. Thus, strong regulations should result from monitoring the labour market and discussion of these findings by the aforementioned bodies.

A Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva SR č. 282/2009 Z. z. o stredných školách*) already stipulates, what professional organisations are responsible for the respective fields of study. An Annex 8 to this decree lists a two digit classification of education branches according to the classification of education branches (*KOV, klasifikácia odborov vzdelania*) and respective organisations of employers.

Furthermore, Sectoral VET Councils are to be established by professional associations/chambers in cooperation with the respective sectoral ministry and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) and the national VET Council to cover trans-regional and trans-sectoral topics. As already detailed in the part "Regional/local government" in chapter 3.2, involvement of employers in VET should be strengthened. They should in fact become

- a powerful body in preparing curricular documents (elaborating IVET graduates' profiles and setting requirements for knowledge, skills, abilities and working habits);
- more important in the direct provision of VET (practical training, provision of equipment, etc.); and
- very powerful in VET policy making (contributing substantially to VET regional strategies).

Before this act came into force in September 2009 stakeholders were invited to participate in respective VET related activities, however, their engagement was not explicitly agreed and set by legislation and their participation was dominantly based on personal cooperation/partnership rather than the institutional one¹⁴.

A curricular reform starting in September 2008 and changes in governance coming in force since September 2009 are two milestones in the recent reforming of VET. It is too soon to predict a real impact of involvement of stakeholders in the respective VET related activities as the quality of labour market intelligence envisaged by the Act on VET is not yet predictable.

Currently, qualification design is initially shaped by developers of state educational programmes (*ŠVP, štátny vzdelávací program*). The State Institute of Vocational Education (*ŠIOV, Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania*) developed state educational programmes corresponding to respective

¹⁴ For detailed description of pre-reform situation see Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008, chapter 07 Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy.

educational fields with the explicitly declared objective of aligning profiles of graduates with employers' requirements in terms of qualifications requirements and translated into learning outcomes.

With regard to the development of ISCED 3C state educational programmes, ŠIOV made use of the DACUM methodology adopted within its cooperation with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). DACUM is an abbreviation of the term "Developing a Curriculum". However the methodology is based on the analysis of professions and jobs in cooperation with employers. Furthermore, employers are free to influence qualification design and curriculum development by answering questionnaires developed by ŠIOV and offered to designers of school educational programmes in order to identify/precise needs and requirements of relevant employers concerning graduates of secondary specialised schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*). The decentralisation of curriculum development is undertaken in school educational programmes to be developed by each school autonomously. They are assisted by a manual of 125 pages issued by ŠIOV in 2008.

The responsibility of social partners, in particular employers, in the final assessment of the quality of graduates is also on the increase. Being initially present only as observers of final exams, they were granted the right to examine students in addition to pedagogical staff.

Similarly to other elements of VET, teacher and trainer training is also on the verge of a new reform. A new act relating to pedagogical staff, introducing credit based in-service training within career paths framed by educational standards, should allow for adjusting in-service training of teachers according to labour market needs. Currently both in-service training and in particular initial training is dominantly supply driven and at risk of dominance of theoretical training over practical training. The increasing interest of professional organisations (e.g. guilds) in providing specialised training and quality guarantee might find its expression within the framework of the new Act on VET.

As already stressed several times, stakeholders' rights and responsibilities are in the process of change and the real impact of their involvement will be much clearer after reform plans embedded in newly adopted legislation are settled. Only one sectoral development could be seen as an example of the translation of sectoral studies' findings into the sectoral VET reform in all segments, i.e. programming VET, assessing VET and teacher and trainer training. Not surprisingly, this happened in the automotive industry, the leading industry of the Slovak national economy. This sector's experience and two self-governing regions' (the Žilina and Bratislava Regions) experience in regional development planning influenced substantially the governance reform represented by the Act on VET. It is however open how the extension to other sectors and regions will succeed. Insufficiently developed methodologies for the identification of labour market needs and their translation into relevant policies might hamper the reform in less developed regions and sectors still fighting with restructuring and with the transition from the heritage of the former command economy.

8. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment

8.1 Strategy and provision

The provision of career guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment is traditionally a shared responsibility of two sectors/ministries – the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*). A detailed look shows that especially during the last two years more progress and positive development was achieved in the educational sector than in the employment services. The description of the main approaches to guidance and counselling is therefore focused on these two sectors separately.

Guidance and counselling provision in the education sector

A series of policy papers relating more or less substantially to career guidance, submitted by the Ministry of Education, were adopted by the Slovak government during spring 2007:

- The Concept of a Pedagogical and Psychological Guidance System and its Implementation into Practice (*Koncepcia pedagogicko-psychologického poradenského systému a jeho implementácie do praxe*), March 2007, focusing on the further development of wide scope guidance and counselling services provided for children and youth since the late 1950's;
- The Concept of Special Education Counselling (*Koncepcia špeciálnopedagogického poradenstva*), March 2007, concentrating on children and youth with special needs; and
- The Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*), April 2007, a key document in this specific area, for the first time putting together and stressing interrelations between lifelong learning and lifelong guidance.

The first two documents were used as a basis for new legislation defining the role of guidance and counselling service providers in the education sector – the new Act on Education came into force in September 2008 and career guidance service provision has a quite important position in it (see below).

In addition to this, the new Act on Vocational Education and Training was approved in May 2009 and will come into force in September 2009. Stress is put here also on the co-operation of all stakeholders and social partners at national and regional levels to harmonize VET with labour market needs. According to this regulation, the regional self-government is responsible, besides other tasks, for informing young people and their parents on labour market needs in the respective region, and also for passing all relevant information of that kind to guidance and counselling centres.

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

In October 2008 the National Forum on Lifelong Guidance as a consulting body of the Minister of Education was established. The National Forum consists of 26 members representing a wide range of institutions, both from governmental as well as from 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 Psychology; Research Institution of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology; information and counselling centres of higher education institutions; Association of Youth Information Centres; Youth Council of Slovakia). In spite of the fact that guidance and counselling is a new topic for many of the National Forum members, the Forum wants, similarly to what is recommended by the Cedefop guidelines (2008), to improve the communication, develop cooperation, identify citizens' needs, improve the quality of the services provided, and to influence lifelong guidance policies, and develop international cooperation.

The first document that the National Forum initiated was the Concept of Lifelong Guidance in the Slovak Republic (*Koncepcia celoživotného poradenstva v SR*), March 2009, submitted to the Ministry of Education in spring 2009. This policy paper (unfortunately, not open for public discussion) defines aims, priorities and specific goals of lifelong guidance on a national level, also in relation to specific target groups. There are several measures suggested for implementation as a whole package through a national project within the Operational Programme Education (Priority 1 – Reform of educational and vocational training system; measure 1.1 – Transformation of traditional school to a modern one; activity

1.1.2 – Supporting educational and career guidance in primary and secondary schools), starting in the second half of 2009 with substantial support from the European Social Fund.

These measures include:

- the analysis of the current situation in lifelong guidance provision in Slovak Republic and the system of lifelong guidance in selected EU countries (direct comparison);
- the 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 of increasing the quality of guidance staff, the development of professional and qualification standards for guidance and counselling practitioners;
- the development of a model of initial and further training of guidance and counselling practitioners;
- the development of educational and training programmes for further, lifelong learning of practitioners;
- the development of a quality assurance system;
- the development of a career information system for lifelong guidance accessible to the public;
- the improvement of access to lifelong guidance services on regional/local levels through establishing new guidance and counselling institutions and facilities.

There are at least three other national projects planned, having some direct or indirect relation to career guidance. Two of them relate to the National Qualification Framework (in the context of the European Qualification Framework), where the National System of Occupations and subsequently the National System of Qualifications are supposed to be developed.

The national project “National System of Occupations in SR” will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and will be carried out within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion, priority 1 – Supporting employment growth, measure 1.1 – Supporting programmes in the area of employment growth and solving problems of unemployment and long-term unemployment. The main goal of the national project will be the development and implementation a system that would allow access to detailed information on labour market (current and future needs of employers, descriptions of occupations including information on required knowledge, skills and qualification) and would contribute to better interconnection between employers' needs and vocational education and training.

The main goal of the parallel national project “National System of Qualifications”, which will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, is to develop a systematic tool that would support the comparability of VET results achieved through/in different forms of education and training, which would allow it

- to certify real knowledge and skills independently from forms of education and training,
- to transfer labour market needs into education and training,
- to inform the public about all nationally certified qualifications,
- to compare national qualification levels with those from other EU countries, or countries involved in EQF.

The National System of Qualifications will be a register, accessible to the public, of all full or partial qualifications accredited in Slovakia.

The last national project with some relevance to career guidance that should be mentioned here is the “Statistical analysis in small and medium enterprises, predicting employees' needs in employing organisations of Slovakia” (*Štatistické zisťovanie v malých a stredných podnikoch, prognózy potrieb zamestnancov v zamestnávateľských organizáciách SR*) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Labour market prospects on local, regional and national levels, quantification of the current and future structure of vacancies, job opportunities, specification and identification of jobs increasingly/decreasingly demanded on the labour market, employment prospects for some specific target groups (e. g. graduates, people with disabilities), adequate utilisation of active labour market policy measures – all this will be possible to be used also in improving the range and quality of career guidance and counselling services for all target groups, both in the educational and employment sectors.

As the National Forum on Lifelong Guidance seems to be, paradoxically, a relatively closed community and there are no signals yet that it will be open to all those who are interested and even directly involved in career guidance and counselling services provision and further development, an initiative was taken by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology to create wider *expert groups* focusing on various aspects of career guidance and counselling services. In spring 2009 three such groups started to work (An expert group on general aspects of career guidance in educational sector; An expert group of career guidance practitioners in primary and secondary education; An expert group for guidance and counselling in higher education institutions). All these expert groups are supposed to provide expertise and submit the results of their efforts to the National Forum.

As far as career guidance and counselling services provision in educational sector itself is concerned, according to the new Act on Education this is the responsibility of the different facilities of education guidance and counselling and prevention, namely:

- centres of educational and psychological counselling and prevention;
- centres of special education guidance and counselling;
- educational counsellors in primary and secondary schools;
- school psychologists;
- school special pedagogues;
- therapeutic pedagogues;
- social pedagogues; and
- prevention coordinators.

Nearly all of these providers existed in the educational sector also according to the previous legislation, but were not explicitly mentioned as part of the guidance and counselling system. (N.B.: career guidance and counselling is here only one part of the more widely arranged services provided by all actors mentioned above.)

Guidance and counselling provision in employment services

There are no major changes in guidance and counselling services provision in employment services comparing the current situation with that of two or three years ago, at least from the current legislation point of view. Due to the financial and economic crisis the situation on the labour market is dramatically changing – the registered unemployment rate increased from 7.36 % in August 2008 (the lowest rate since the early nineties) to 11.39 % in May 2009:

Table 46: Unemployed and unemployment rate between August 2008 and May 2009

	8/2008	9/2008	10/2008	11/2008	12/2008	1/2009	2/2009	3/2009	4/2009	5/2009
Number of registered disposable unemployed	192098	196698	195922	203430	218920	239252	257564	273779	289340	301871
Registered unemployment rate (%)	7.36	7.54	7.51	7.80	8.39	9.03	9.72	10.33	10.92	11.39

Source: Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny)

Guidance and counselling in this situation is viewed as a supporting measure both for all newly registered unemployed and also for long-term unemployed, the reduction of the unemployment rate through various active labour market measures is hampered by the very limited number of vacancies.

An important policy paper, “The Employment Strategy (Predicting labour market needs and skills)” (*Stratégia zamestnanosti (Prognózovanie potrieb trhu práce a zručností)*) was submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family to government in August 2008. Improving career guidance and counselling provision, more transparent information on labour market trends and required skills in a globalised European labour market, together with many other measures are presented here as specific goals of this policy. What seems to be very important in this context is the fact that the ministry clearly declares its responsibility to participate actively in activities defined by the Strategy on Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance.

The responsibility for career guidance and counselling provision for the unemployed (registered) and employed job seekers, including disadvantaged groups lies mainly with public employment services (Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family), as well as with agencies for supported employment (focusing on long-term unemployed and people with disabilities), and partly with agencies for temporary employment.

As far as the question of the evidence base is concerned, it should be mentioned here that career guidance and counselling policy and strategy design is very rarely based on deep and serious analyses, evaluation and research of existing data, with the argument that there is either a lack of financial resources, and/or shortage of time.

Cooperation between education and employment sectors is still something that is merely claimed at various levels, rather than really existing. In spite of the fact that the Strategy on Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance was adopted by the government, the key role that is played by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is not active enough here, at least not in the sense of trying to be the most important stakeholder in relation to the entire adult population, not just the registered (mostly) and unregistered job seekers.

8.2 Target groups and modes of delivery

The target groups in the education sector are primary and secondary school children and youth, mainly in upper grades who can use career information, guidance and counselling services provided by specialised staff and school facilities mentioned in the previous section. Students in higher education are offered these services in career information and guidance centres, which were established with the support of ESF financial resources during the last few years in many faculties and/or universities throughout the country.

In employment services target groups are strictly defined by the Act on Employment Services – two categories are distinguished here: unemployed (and registered) job seekers, and employed job seekers (registration is not obligatory). Career information and guidance services are usually offered to all clients, career counselling is focusing mainly on disadvantaged registered/unemployed job seekers (especially long-term unemployed, those under 25 or over 50 years of age, people with disabilities, etc.).

When talking about career guidance and counselling for groups with special needs in the education sector, we have in mind mainly children and young people with disabilities – they could be offered some measures focusing on their specific career development. There is a set of written information (both in printed and electronic versions) with the detailed description of medical, psychological and labour market aspects of career guidance for pupils and students with 13 different types of health problems influencing their career choices. Information and help is offered also to their parents, teachers, educational counsellors and all those who are, or could be interested.

Another possibility is a module for people with disabilities in a web based program *Guide to the World of Occupations* with the title “Have you got a health problem?” (The Slovak title of the program is “*Sprievodca svetom povolaní*” and is available at www.povolania.eu; An English and eight other languages versions are available at www.gwo.cz).

Also the web based Integrated System of Type Positions (ISTP, *Integrovaný systém typových pozícií*; www.istp.sk) allows clients in one module (so-called Analysis of individual potential) to identify their health problem and then they can be offered specific information relating to their prospects in the labour market.

In employment services all the above mentioned measures are available also for adult clients, mainly registered, unemployed job seekers. Besides these, clients with health problems can visit one of the five Information and Guidance Centres for people with disabilities (they are part of the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family), where an attempt to measure their individual employability potential is made and corresponding job offers are provided by qualified staff.

In relation to pupils and students a quite wide range of career information is provided, focusing mainly on further education and training paths in secondary and/or postsecondary educational institutions. This is combined also with information on possible career prospects, employment possibilities and job offers at local, regional, and national levels, in some cases also at EU level (web portals www.eures.sk, as well as PLOTEUS are used here). Those who have some problems with their career decisions (e. g. who are not able for various reasons to make the decision, those with ambitions not corresponding to their

potential, etc.) could use psychological counselling provided by school psychologists or by the Centre of Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention.

Mainly for primary school pupils in their last, 9th grade, an interesting career information product titled "World of Work" was developed by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. An interactive DVD presents several types of useful information supporting career guidance and the first career choice.

The DVD is structured as follows:

- a detailed information on 35 areas of work and corresponding occupations;
- how to apply for a job;
- information on (and link to) the Integral System of Type Positions (internet portal developed earlier also for guidance and counselling purposes, www.istp.sk);
- useful contacts (offices of labour, social affairs and family, EURES services, Association of educational counsellors).

The development, production and dissemination of the DVD was part of the national project "Employment services modernisation through supporting the development of tools and forms of information and mediation services" supported by the ESF. There were 80 thousand copies of the DVD produced and provided to offices of labour and schools at the end of 2008.

Methods for the main target groups of clients in employment services are similar to those mentioned above – provision of a wide range of career information including vacancies; individual action plans are obligatory, offered to some groups of disadvantaged job seekers (those under 25, over 50 years of age, long-term unemployed); a set of psychological methods and instruments used as "bilan de competences" mainly in guidance and counselling for long-term unemployed and some other disadvantaged job seekers.

Since the adoption of the Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*), the importance of career guidance and counselling both in education and employment sectors has been increasing. It is evident at least from policy papers, but less evident in reality, especially in the professionalization of career guidance and services provision, initial and lifelong learning possibilities for guidance practitioners, financial sources, adequate support of research and evidence base, quality assurance, etc. Most of these shortages are addressed by the Strategy and the Concept of Lifelong Guidance and there are some ideas, plans how to deal with these challenges in the next three – four years.

8.3 Guidance and counselling personnel

There is no accreditation scheme for gaining professional credentials for career guidance counsellors in Slovakia, neither in education, nor in employment sectors. The main reason is that "career guidance practitioner/counsellor" does not exist as an official, certified occupation, there are only people who are dealing with career guidance and counselling issues, who provide career information, guidance and counselling services. Career guidance and counselling as a comprehensive study programme or course is not available in universities or other third level educational institutions.

Qualification background of professionals providing career information, guidance and counselling services in both educational and employment sectors is as follows:

- Educational counsellors in elementary and secondary schools are regular teachers with a university degree (Master level) qualified in two or three school subjects. Most of them have in-company, on-the-job training for career guidance and counselling, the duration of which varies from 40 to 200 hours. According to the current legislation in the educational sector no formal qualification for career guidance and counselling is required and therefore no university or any third level educational institution offers such a course. On the other hand there were many different courses for "career counsellors" or in career guidance and counselling running throughout the country provided mostly by accredited non-governmental organisations and funded from the ESF. The problem is that these courses are not following one common qualification/occupational standard and therefore they vary in content, structure, duration, quality and also in other details.
- School psychologists must have a 5-year university qualification in psychology, most often in counselling or educational psychology (where "counselling" means all areas of counselling, not specifically career counselling – this is only a very small part of their pre-graduate course).

- School special pedagogues – with respect to their main task (providing help and assistance for children with special educational needs, or with disabilities), career guidance and counselling is only a marginal topic in their duties and usually they have no formal or informal/non-formal training in career guidance and counselling.
- There is no formal qualification required for career information and guidance officers in employment services working at the Career Information and Guidance Departments of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (*úradý práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) and here it is possible to have very different and variable qualification backgrounds – it is even not necessary to have a university degree.
- In the case of career counsellors working at the Counselling Services units of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family a master level of university degree is required by the current legislation (Act on Employment Services No. 5/2004 Col.), but it does not include any further specification, which means that also here it is possible to find counsellors with very different and variable university qualifications.

Although there are hardly any possibilities to gain qualification in career guidance and counselling in formal education, quite a lot has been done in this field for guidance practitioners, especially in the educational sector, through various training projects undertaken during the previous ESF programme period (2004 – 2006/2008). A very good example of such an initiative is a set of studying materials for guidance practitioners in the educational sector published by the Methodical and Pedagogical Centre in Bratislava at the end of 2007 and disseminated in 2008 under the title “Effective prevention of unemployment starts with career education and career guidance and counselling in schools and school facilities” (*Efektívna prevencia pred nezamestnanosťou začína kariérovou výchovou a kariérovým poradenstvom v školách a školských zariadeniach*). In June 2009 the electronic version of the whole set was disseminated through intranet also to staff providing career information, guidance and counselling services in Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

9. Financing: investment in human resources

9.1 Funding for initial vocational education and training

There is no substantial difference in funding the respective levels of education, except the difference caused institutionally. VET offered by specialised secondary schools (SOŠ, *stredná odborná škola*) and VET establishments (covering upper secondary and post-secondary non tertiary education) is regulated by Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Establishments (*Zákon č. 597/2003 Z. z. o financovaní základných škôl, stredných škôl a školských zariadení*), as amended, while funding higher education institutions (covering tertiary education) by the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*), as amended.

As explained earlier, lower secondary education and apprenticeships are not crucial for consideration with regard to the Slovak VET system.

Funding upper secondary and post-secondary non tertiary VET

Funding flows

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 parliament to “per class” funding as a consequence of lobbying of representatives of little rural schools, predominantly schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction. A new Act No. 597/2003 Coll. finally introduced a per capita funding 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 the schools.

Since January 2004 all primary and secondary schools (of respective category established for the purpose of budgeting; see Table 49) 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.

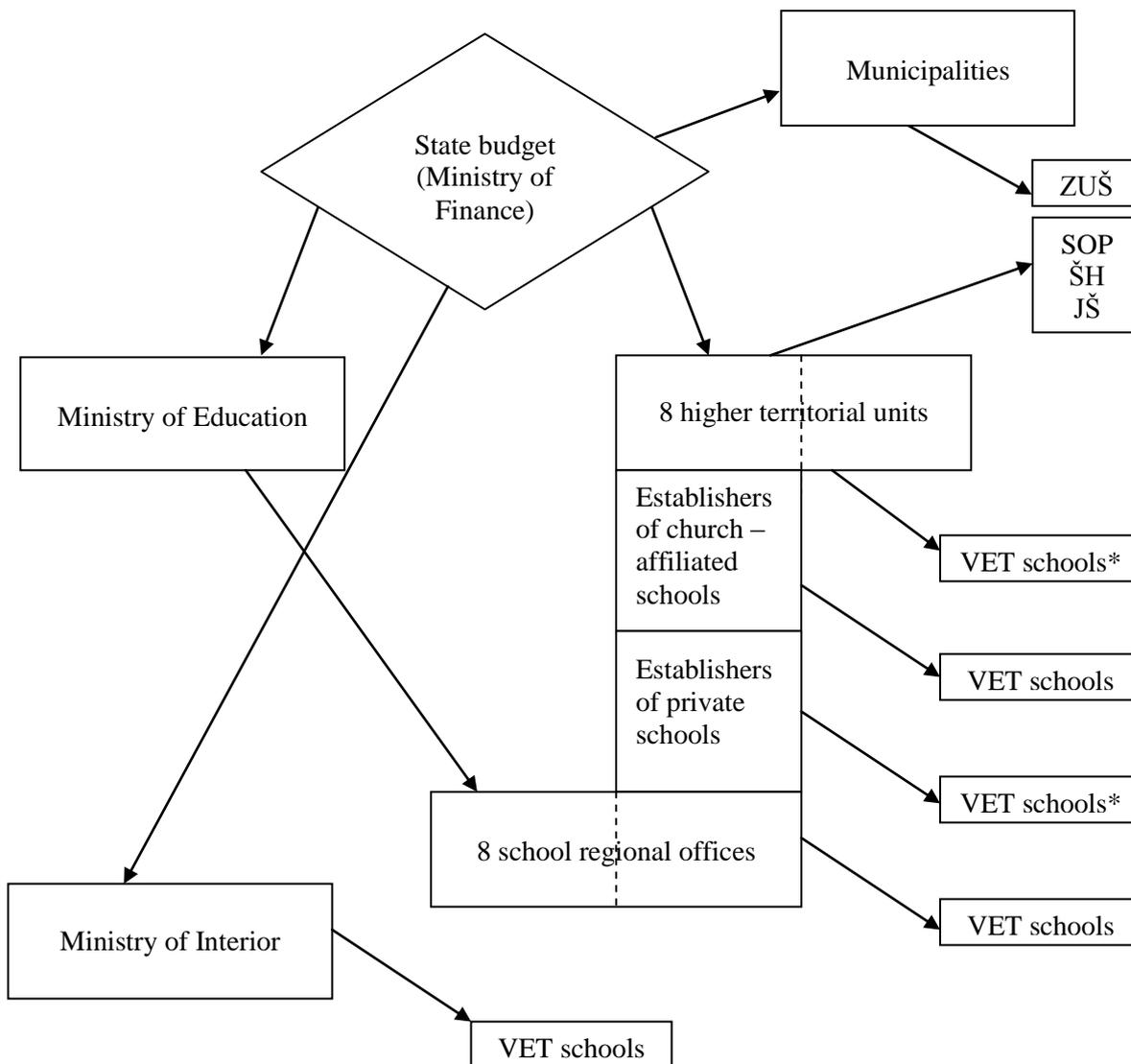
From 2005, fiscal decentralisation came into force through the redefinition of the income tax revenue. Although centrally collected, the essential part of income tax goes from the Ministry of Finance (MF, *Ministerstvo financií*) directly to self-governing bodies to cover their expenditures: 70.3 % was 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 belongs to transferred competences, and therefore self-governing regions and municipalities are entitled to receive an additional contribution from the state budget (from the budget chapter of the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*)).

The following chart (Chart 1) depicts funding flows in regional schooling, within which funding VET is highlighted.

Chart 1

Financial flows in initial secondary and post-secondary non tertiary VET



Notes: * - VET schools and centres of practical training, ZUŠ – basic schools of arts (*základné umelecké školy*), SOP – centres of vocational practice (*strediská odbornej praxe*), ŠH - school farms (*školské hospodárstva*), JŠ – language schools (*jazykové školy*)

Sources of funding with respective shares are presented in the table below.

Table 47: Sources of financing regional education in 2008 (in thousands EUR and %)

Indicator	1000s EUR	%
State budget	1 061 500.09	93.67
Municipalities and higher territorial units	23 454.63	2.07
Renting school facilities	6 440.60	0.57
Profit from own entrepreneurial activities	795.97	0.07
Contributions from parents to partially cover costs related to material care*	1 862.54	0.16
Contributions from parents to partially cover educational costs in selected schools (including tuition fees in private schools)	7 888.53	0.70
Contributions and gifts from entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs' associations	3 586.48	0.32
Others (including income from students' productive work)	27 748.86	2.45
Total	1 133 277.70	100

Source: MŠ

Note: EUR 1 = SKK 33.014 as of 31st December 2008

* contributions to meals and accommodation at facilities established by regional school offices (*krajské školské úrady*)

As can be seen from the table above, regional schools are dominantly state budget funded (93.67 %).

The following table (Table 48) details state budget funds earmarked for current expenditure and capital expenditure. It clearly indicates that the dominant share (94.87 %) of funding from the state budget is allocated normatively (per capita).

Table 48: Budget breakdown of state budget sources in 2008 (in thousands EUR and %)

Budget line	1000s EUR	%	
Current expenditure total	1 046 787.27	98.61	
Of which	Wages, insurance, operations (allocated normatively)	1 007 024.87	94.87
	Other (not normatively)	39 762.40	3.75
Capital expenditure	14 712.82	1.39	
Total funding from the state budget	1 061 500.09	100	

Source: MŠ

Note: EUR 1 = SKK 33.014 as of 31st December 2008

Current expenditure flow description

Funding of original competences is covered from income coming to self-governing regions (HTUs, higher territorial units, VÚC, *vyššie územné celky*) and municipalities directly from the state budget. Funding of transferred competences comes in via the Ministry of Education and its budget heading.

Further, funds are distributed via eight regional school offices to founders (including private and church affiliated) for financing wages and operational expenditure of schools.

Regional school offices cannot redistribute funds received but must earmark the funds and pass them to founders. Major founders are self-governing regions (higher territorial units). Other founders are regional school offices themselves (they are founders of a few institutions that are not suitable for being maintained by the self-governing region due to their trans-regional impact), church and religious denominations; and finally diverse private entities (e.g. limited companies).

Founders receive resources for VET schools and establishments (centres of practical training) calculated exactly according to per capita norms, but they could partly redistribute them in the case that they maintain more than one of them. However, they are obliged to transfer to each school and establishment at least a part of the per capita receipts set by the decree of the government. It was 80 % of the wage norm and 75 % of the operational norm for mainstream schools and 50 % of both norms for schools for students with special needs in the first year of the reform guaranteed by legislation. In 2009, at least

90 % of the wage norm and 80 % of the operational norm for mainstream schools and 80 % of both norms for schools for students with special needs are envisaged.

In order to prevent the harsh impact of per capita funding to respective schools (predominantly small rural schools) a minimum guaranteed funding was originally envisaged for the first three years of the reform; i.e. 95 % of the previous year's funding for current expenditures was guaranteed by the Ministry of Education. This measure is also confirmed for 2009.

A specific measure of the Ministry of Education (e.g. 5/2008-R of 25th February 2008) regulates the process of negotiation between the ministry and founders of schools and establishments to correct errors in the input data. Furthermore, to support transparency, regional school offices have to publish on their web-sites the costs allocated for wages, insurance and levies, and purchase of goods and services for all institutions in the region.

As can be seen from the chart above, there are also other institutions (that can be categorised as VET related) funded directly from self-governing regions (basic schools of arts (ZUŠ, *základné umelecké školy*), (language schools (JŠ, *jazykové školy*), centres of vocational practice (SOP, *strediská odbornej praxe*) and school farms (ŠH, *školské hospodárstva*)); and funded directly by municipalities (basic schools of arts (ZUŠ)). Since 2008 also non-state basic schools of art have been funded by municipalities from resources targeted for original competences (and coming from income tax).

As municipalities, similar to higher territorial units, are given the resources to cover original and transferred competences from the state budget, they also have to fund some educational institutions. The most important transferred competences concern establishing basic schools (including also lower secondary education). Flows to cover this and other non-VET activities are not depicted in the chart in order to make it easier to read.

At least 94 % of the total contribution from the Ministry of Education must be offered via normatives and only 6 % according to alternative procedures (see also Chart 2 below).

Capital expenditures flow

Capital investment is sensitive to the state budget capacity and the limits set by the fiscal policy of the Ministry of Finance. Although norms had to be set originally in cooperation between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education also for capital investments, after fiscal decentralisation capital expenditure is to be covered as a rule by founders. Only extraordinarily (e.g. in case of emergency), can capital expenditures be covered from the state budget from the budget heading of the Ministry of Education. Thus only public/state schools can be funded from the tax money (however not from earmarked streams coming to higher territorial units via the Ministry of Education and regional school offices, but from income tax funds coming directly from the state budget (Ministry of Finance). Schools' requirements have exceeded available resources for a long period. Thus, a modernisation debt was even officially proclaimed. Representatives of self-governing regions criticise the fact that they were given responsibility for regional educational institutions that had been in very bad condition with regard to equipment and facilities.

Financial management types and sources of funding from a VET school point of view

Traditionally, there were two main types of upper secondary schools providing VET: specialised secondary schools (SOŠ, *stredné odborné školy*) and vocational secondary schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilištia*). In recent years, main VET providers (SOŠ and SOU) have been merging to form associated secondary schools (ZSS, *združené stredné školy*) and/or joined schools (SŠ, *spojené školy*). Since September 2008 all VET schools are categorised as specialised secondary schools (see also the whole part 4).

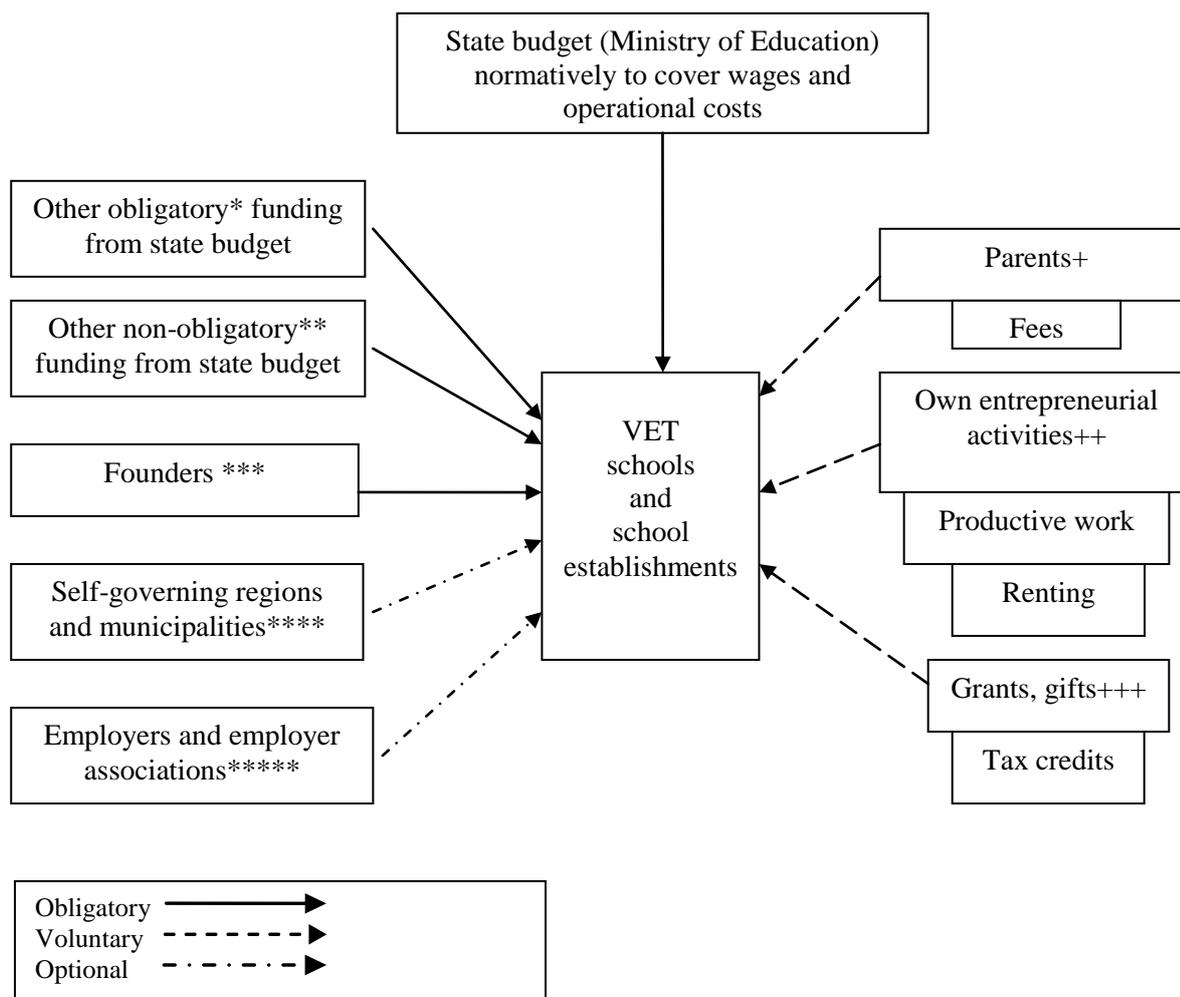
Funding and overall regulation of VET schools has traditionally depended on the financial management type of the school. SOU have been classified as contributory organisations whereby they were only co-funded by the state (due to their historical links with enterprises and the funding they used to receive from them and also due to their ability to earn from their own productive work). SOŠ have been classified as budgetary organisations whereby they were almost purely funded from tax money. Now it is up to the regional educational authorities to decide on the financial management type in the current phase of changing the categories (and names) of schools.

The most important difference in management was originally as follows: budgetary organisations were strongly linked to the state budget or self-governing regional budgets and were due to return their income to the state budget, while contributory organisations were not. Up to 50 % of their income is to

be covered by their own income and the rest from contributions from tax money. The most important difference affecting the accountancy of contributory organisations concerns depreciation, which is not applied within the accountancy of budgetary organisations.

In addition to the later detailed obligatory contribution from the budget heading of the Ministry of Education based on norms, schools also receive, directly or indirectly, other funding (to a maximum of 6 % of the total contribution from the Ministry of Education). Sources of funding VET schools are depicted within Chart 2 below.

Chart 2
Sources of funding for regional VET schools



Notes: * E.g. schools are supported on request to cover their need for officially recognised textbooks and costs of officially organised student competitions.

** Schools might receive funds after successful application for funding a development project elaborated in response to a call launched by the Ministry of Education to improve education (e.g. to improve ICT in education). Public schools might receive funds for capital investment, however only extraordinarily; they can also request additional funding to meet specific issues as e.g. financing the transport of students and the wages of assistants for students with special needs.

*** Founders might co-finance their schools from their budgets with regard to current expenditures and are also responsible for capital investment. Private and church affiliated institutions were not entitled to claim capital investment from tax money. Public schools might receive funds for capital investment from budgets of self-governing regions as founders, and therefore from tax money, however this is not claimable.

**** Self-governments are not obliged to co-finance VET, but they could decide to do it even for schools that are not established/maintained by them.

***** There are no direct mandatory contributions to IVET from businesses to VET schools. Employers could contract students in VET school for the purpose of future employment and as a consequence to co-finance their VET accordingly. This is however quite rare and should be boost by new Act on VET No. 184/2009 Coll. (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní*).

+ Parents pay for school supplies and special textbooks (e.g. foreign language books printed abroad and considered by the school to be more appropriate than those available for free from the Ministry of Education). They are also usually required to contribute to the budget maintained by the Association of Parents (*Rodičovské združenie*) by a small lump sum about EUR 10 yearly. There are no detailed analyses of these marginal sources. Private schools are however entitled to charge parents with admission and tuition fees.

++ Schools can also earn from their own entrepreneurial activities. In case of public/state schools it is however regulated by the Ministry of Education, currently by the Methodological Guideline No. 5/2007/-R valid since 1st March 2007 (*Metodický pokyn č. 5/2007-R z 1. marca 2007, ktorým sa určuje postup škôl a školských zariadení pri vykonávaní podnikateľskej činnosti*). Entrepreneurial activities cannot in any case harm education. VET schools offering ISCED 3C VET (typically former SOU) are entitled to earn from productive work of students. Schools very often rent facilities. Making use of earnings from renting premises and equipment are the subject of the bosses of decision of founders, and therefore public/state schools as a rule lose part of these earnings for the sake of the budget of the founder.

+++ All schools can apply for diverse grants from public or private grant giving programmes, and submit projects to earn from European structural funds and various sub-programmes of Lifelong Learning Programme, in particular the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Schools can also accept gifts from sponsors based on a deed of gift. 2 % of the income tax and corporate tax could be allocated for activities of NGOs, therefore there are school-affiliated NGOs earning from this source successfully for the improvement of learning environment.

Funding per capita (current expenditures)

State contributions to budgets of respective educational institutions (see the table below) are substantially based on normatives (per student contributions from the state budget). All schools regardless of type and ownership (i.e. also private schools) are subsidised from the state budget equally based on current normatives figures. These normatives are composed of wage normatives and operational normatives. Tables 49 and 50 offer an overview of current expenditure normatives¹⁵.

Table 49: Current expenditure averages per student in 2004, 2007 and 2008 (in EUR**)**

School category***	Wage normative			Operational normative (minimum)			Normative total (minimum)**		
	2004	2007	2008	2004	2007	2008	2004	2007	2008
Regular ZŠ	409.0	593.1	661.2	98.2	152.5	169.1	507.2	745.7	830.3
Regular G	490.5	720.8	803.5	99.8	156.0	174.3	590.2	876.8	977.8
SOŠ	682.6	926.0	1032.2	103.6	161.5	182.8	786.2	1 087.4	1 215.0
CA	682.6	752.1	838.4	103.6	156.8	175.6	786.2	908.9	1 014.0
SOŠ of Health	792.5	1 228.6	1 369.6	105.8	169.6	195.2	898.2	1 398.2	1 564.7
SOŠ of Art	792.5	1 418.9	1 581.6	105.8	174.6	203.0	898.2	1 593.5	1 784.6
Conservatories	1 707.9	2 702.9	3 013.0	123.8	209.0	255.7	1 831.7	2 912.0	3 268.7
SOU and U	746.7	1 079.1	1 202.8	120.6	190.5	213.2	867.4	1 269.5	1 416.0
SPV	309.3	419.5	467.6	96.2	147.9	162.0	405.5	567.4	629.6
G, SOŠ for disabled	1 056.6	1 482.8	1 652.9	142.5	201.3	229.7	1 199.2	1 684.1	1 882.6
SOU for disabled	1 056.6	1 791.7	1 997.3	142.5	209.6	242.4	1 425.0	2 001.3	2 239.7
OU and PŠ	1 056.6	2 045.8	2 280.5	142.5	216.4	252.8	1 425.0	2 262.2	2 533.3

Source: MŠ

Notes: * In case of SOU and U without practical training normatives were only 394.5 and 505.8 respectively
 ** Sum of two normatives (wage and operational); the range in operational normatives (only minimum is presented in the table) is in detail regulated according to specific variables (one of variables was represented by eight climate categories with different heating requirements), the maximum normative was higher in each category by EUR 22.3 in 2004 and 21.6. in 2005. In 2006, it represented EUR 24.5, however in case of special schools normatives varied more (also depending on the category of disability) with maximum EUR 5 721.8.
 *** ZŠ – basic schools (*základné školy*), G – grammar schools (*gymnázia*), CA – Commercial academies, U – vocational schools (*učilištia*), SPV – centres of practical training (*strediská praktického vyučovania*), SOŠ – secondary specialised schools (*stredné odborné školy*), SOU – secondary vocational schools (*stredné odborné učilištia*); OU – vocational schools (*odborné učilištia*), PŠ – practical schools (*praktické školy*); ZŠ and G data are presented for the sake of comparison, special ZŠ for disabled and G specialising on sports are not included.

**** 2004 data according to the exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 41.16 as of 31st December 2003; 2007 data according to the exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 34.573 as of 29th December 2006, 2008 data according to the exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 33.603 as of 31st December 2007.

¹⁵ For data in 2005 and 2006 see Slovakia: Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2008.

Details about the construction of normatives and parametric changes within allocation formulae are set by a Regulation of the Government allowing adjustment each year in order to reflect needs. This regulation (the newest set to regulate financing in 2009 is No. 630/2008) allows the calculation of future contribution to the budget for all schools and establishments. Derivatives from these norms are used to stimulate specific policies, higher normative is applied for schools for minorities or for students with special needs integrated into mainstream school.

Two interesting components of operational norms are depicted in the following table indicating the resources, quite modest indeed, available for the improvement of quality of pedagogical work.

Table 50: Funding of the learning environment* in 2004-2008 (in EUR)

School category	Materials, equipment, etc.					Continuing training of pedagogical staff			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
Regular ZŠ	14.2	16.4	17.6	22.0	24.6	2.3	2.4	3.0	9.9
Regular G	15.8	18.3	20.6	24.8	27.7	2.8	3.2	3.6	12.1
SOŠ	19.6	22.7	24.3	29.3	32.7	3.8	4.1	4.6	15.5
CA	19.6	18.3	21.2	25.5	28.5	2.8	3.3	3.8	12.6
SOŠ of Health	21.8	27.8	29.8	35.9	40.1	5.1	5.4	6.1	20.5
SOŠ of Art	21.8	31.0	38.1	40.0	44.7	5.9	7.4	7.1	23.7
Conservatories	39.8	46.1	56.4	68.0	75.9	9.6	11.9	13.5	45.2
SOU and U	20.9	24.2**	25.9	32.6	36.5	4.2**	4.4	5.4	18.0
SPV	12.2	14.1	15.1	18.3	20.4	1.7	1.8	2.1	7.0
G, SOŠ for disabled	27.0	24.1	44.1	41.4	46.3	6.0	7.5	7.4	24.8
SOU for disabled	27.0	24.1	44.1	48.2	53.8	6.0	7.5	9.0	30.0
OU and PŠ	27.0	24.1	49.3	53.7	60.0	6.0	8.9	10.2	34.2

Source: MŠ

Notes: * means out of total norms per student intended for direct funding of learning environment
 ** In SOU and U not offering practical training norms were reduced - only 15.1 and 2.0, respectively.
 For school category abbreviation explanation see the previous table; for exchange rates for 2004, 2007 and 2008 see the previous table. 2005 data according to the exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 38.796 as of 31st December 2004, 2006 data according to the exchange rate EUR 1 = SKK 37.848 as of 30th December 2005.

No means were specified for staff training in 2004. Since the 2008 equivalent of 1.5 % of wages is available to cover continuing professional development of staff compared to 0.5 % in previous years.

Funding tertiary education

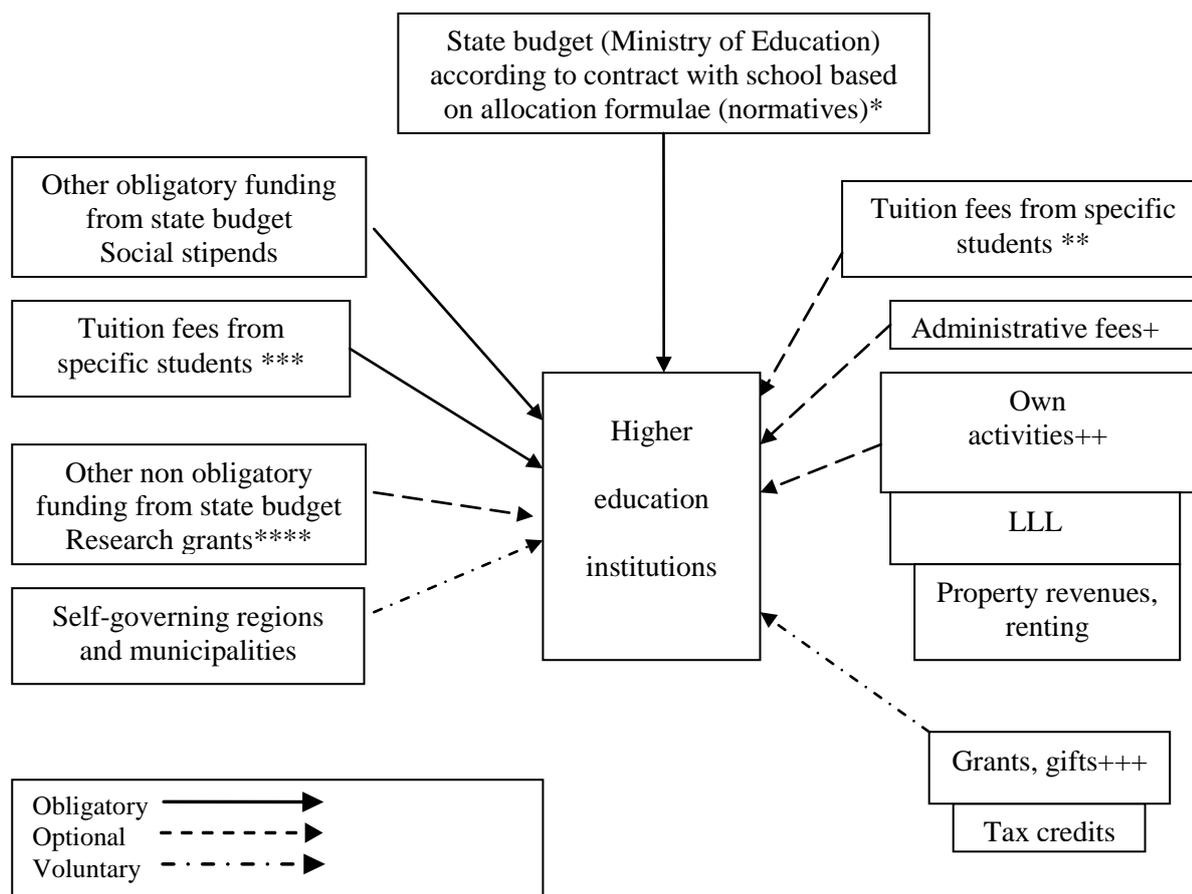
Public higher education institutions are legal entities that in contrast to regional schools are also owners of their facilities. It means that they can also earn from selling buildings they do not consider useful anymore. Contributions from the state budget are based on a contract between the respective institution and the Ministry of Education. Contracts specify amounts offered for respective activities according to programmes (e.g. education, research, etc.) based on an allocation formulae and budgeting procedures agreed between the Ministry of Education, the Slovak Rectors' Conference (*Slovenská rektorská konferencia*) and the Higher Education Council (*Rada vysokých škôl*). The most important inputs are quality of staff (corresponding to career levels), quality of research measured by numbers of publications in specific categories and by research projects conducted and of course by number of students. The per capita contributions are based on coefficients of pedagogical and economic demands of which the first is represented by the ratio of students per staff considered appropriate for the respective study branch and the second estimates the operational costs of delivery of the respective studies in comparison with the study of law (considered least costly and having an Index of 1). In order to avoid competition over students and the concentration on education disregarding research and development, a correction to recognise research activities of schools was applied. Funds from the state budget for respective schools are composed of two components. The first component refers to the number of students. The second component refers to the volume and quality of research. The research component is sensitive to the volume of funding the respective school was able to win in competition

for research and development grants, and to the number and value of publications the value being fixed according to agreed categories. In 2008 the respective share was 70 % of the total income from contracts referring to the number of students and 30 % according to success in competition (to some extent research results based). This share should be changed to 65/35 in 2009 to favour competition for grant funds and publishing over accepting extensive amounts of students.

In public (state) schools tuition fees are not required for full-time students and for a part of part-time students, whose study costs are the subject of a contract with the Ministry of Education. From additional part-time students (see part 4.7) tuition fees are required to cover their study costs. Furthermore, students over 26 years of age and those studying longer than the time officially set by the programme are made to pay.

In addition to funding from the Ministry of Education representing a dominant part of their budgets, schools have to earn also from other sources, e.g. grants (in particular research grants) and additional entrepreneurial activities, among which paid lifelong learning activities must be stressed here. Under the umbrella of lifelong learning, many educational activities are conducted making use of know-how or even the facilities of the universities. These activities are offered in order to differentiate between regular education and training offered to students under contract with the Ministry of Education and these additional activities, which do not receive state funding and therefore can be made payable by participants.

Chart 3
Financial flows and sources of funding of higher education



Notes: * or from other ministries' budgets (Ministry of Health (*Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*), Ministry of Interior (*Ministerstvo vnútra*), Ministry of Defence (*Ministerstvo obrany*) for state school specific for respective sectors: healthcare, police, military); Ministry of Education can also offer contributions to private schools, after informing and receiving comments from the Higher Education Council, Student Higher Education Council (*Študentská rada vysokých škôl*), Slovak Rectors Conference and approval of the government

** over quota part-time students, non EU countries' citizens

*** full-time students studying in more programmes, or exceeding standard length of study

**** There are diverse semi-independent grant giving schemes financed from state budget, income from these grants is important not just to cover research and remuneration costs but also as important entry for allocation formulae influencing volume of their next year contracts with the Ministry of Education.

+ costs of entrance procedures, fees for issuing diverse documents, etc.

++ In addition to already indicated LLL activities and property revenues also revenues from intellectual property, from own financial funds and other activities complying with main mission of schools.

+++All schools can apply for diverse grants from public or private grant giving programmes (*inter alia* of large companies), and submit projects to earn income from European structural funds and various sub-programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Schools can also accept gifts from sponsors based on a deed of gift.

2 % of the income tax and corporate tax could be allocated for activities of NGOs, therefore there are school-affiliated NGOs successfully earning from this source for improving their learning environment.

Funding policy, its impact and expected changes

The introduction of normative funding resulted in a more transparent allocation of funds; however, normatives have been set and adjusted to the capabilities of the state budget. Thus, the internal debts of educational institutions in the process of modernisation, as well as visibly eroding the quality standards of graduates, something not taken into account in economic terms, make the introduction of counterbalancing measures inevitable. A failure to link funding with quality control of graduates is a long-term weakness of the educational policy.

There are no exact data about volumes of funds inflowing from alternative sources of funding IVET in respective levels. Only public money expenditure is regularly under control. Monitoring bodies focus on following financial rules, and the most important signal of successful financial management is a balanced budget at the end of the fiscal year. Since reforms introduced by the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll., higher education institutions have not been bailed out anymore by the Ministry of Education and their expenditures have been successfully capped. Similarly, secondary VET schools and establishments' expenditures were capped by the financing reform introduced by Act No. 597/2003 Coll. Thus, hard budget constraints applied towards all educational institutions is a political success for the Ministry of Finance rather than the Ministry of Education. Normatives are gradually refined as can also be seen from Tables 49 and 50 above; however the main signal to schools' policies - to attract as many students as possible, has remained unchanged. Fighting for students continues to be coupled with the softening of educational standards, as there has been no efficient quality assurance introduced into schools. Gradually, regional authorities are intensifying their policies with regard to reducing school networks and study programmes, in an attempt to optimise expenditures.

In the light of the decreasing number of public/state schools and the mushrooming of private and church affiliated schools, political controversies seem to loom on the horizon. Public/state schools claimed that they were discriminated against compared to private and church affiliated schools, as the incoming normatives from the Ministry of Education for private and church affiliated schools are not affected by the reductions of normatives by founders. Authorities establishing public schools are entitled to do this in order to create a temporary reserve fund at the regional level and to differentiate among schools, while founders of single private or church affiliated schools transfer the full normative to their school. On the other hand, private schools feel discriminated against as they are not eligible for contributions from the state budget for capital expenditure (not even in case of emergency - in contrast to public and church affiliated schools), according to the newest measure valid since 2009. Although private schools officially require tuition fees from parents in contrast to church affiliated schools and public schools and therefore have an additional source of funding, they feel discriminated against in contrast to church affiliated schools, as can be seen from some new 2009 policies presented below.

Linking funding and quality in regional schooling is in a very slow progress. The obligation of regional schools to prepare annual reports to the public about school outcomes introduced by the Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 9/2006 Coll. has resulted in an overall narrative rather than a detailed accountability feedback so far, and has not been translated into any fiscal corrections. Nevertheless, as a result of the shameless advertising of some private secondary schools about ISCED 3A programmes, and subsequent criticism for not maintaining quality standards in some private schools, the possibility of punishing private schools was introduced in 2008 by § 6a of the Act No. 597/2003 Coll. A 15 % reduction of normative for each month of failure (e.g. not sticking to curricula, too many teachers without qualifications, exceeding numbers of students in class) identified by the State School Inspection (*Štátna školská inšpekcia*) lasts, can be applied. This measure will be applied only to private schools and no similar measures are to be applied to public and church affiliated schools. Surprisingly, such an extension has not been proposed by legislators. On the other hand, there are also some positive

incentives: bonuses for schools are possible for successful performance of students in national and international events (e.g. student competitions or projects), according to § 4b of the same act.

There is in fact little known about the efficiency of allocation of resources as there is no overall data about the total income of educational institutions available. It affects institutions depending substantially on alternative sources to the state budget (in particular former SOU which were expected by the state to earn independently as they were not budgetary but contributory organisations, and all higher education institutions). Monitoring data is also complicated due to the involvement of school-affiliated non-profit organisations that earn part of the income used by schools. The real income from their own activities and other private sources is therefore not known in detail, often even to the regular staff of the institution. As overall expenditures are not monitored by the educational authorities, and there is no research conducted on the real structure of expenditures and benefits of VET, changes in policies are not evidence based and are dominantly driven by lobbying of important players (*inter alia*, political parties).

For a temporary period (2010 and 2011), church affiliated establishments (e.g. language schools and basic schools of art, which were classified by us as IVET schools) are guaranteed to receive from the budget of the self-governing authorities at least 88 % of per capita funding offered to respective public establishments, according to Act No. 179/2009 Coll. amending Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on financing. This is in contrast with private entities that are also entitled to ask for co funding from the budget of the municipality, or self-governing region (as funding this is their so-called original competence), however, without a guaranteed level of co funding. For the years 2007-2009, at least 90 % of the per capita funding was guaranteed for both the private and church affiliated establishments.

There is no collective fund for VET in place. Long-lasting efforts to persuade the Ministry of Finance to reduce levies or offer some tax incentives for those willing to co fund VET have come at least for the moment to an end: In contrast to expectations Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET coming into force since September 2009 stipulates in detail the establishment of a non-state VET Fund in 2010. However, this fund will face problems with sources as contributions from the state authorities are forbidden and businesses are asked to contribute only on a voluntary basis receiving no stimulation from the state.

An important possibility is open for founders of schools to reduce the modernisation debt through applying for funding from the Regional Operational Programme managed by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development. Priority Axis 1 Infrastructure of Education is aimed at the reconstruction, expansion and modernisation of school facilities and the procurement of equipment, including ICT equipment for schools in connection with their reconstruction, expanding and modernisation. The Operational Programme Bratislava Region (Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective) offers similar options for schools from the Bratislava Region, however only to a limited extent, as this region with GDP per capita far over 75 % of the EU average does not qualify for the Convergence Objective. In addition and in contrast to the earlier ESF programming period, a specified ESF Operational Programme Education managed by the Ministry of Education is aimed at the reform of education in regional schooling, the support of improvements of higher education and the development of human resources for a knowledge-based society within Priority Axis 1 Reform of Education and Vocational Training System. The main objective is being achieved by two measures:

1.1 Transformation of traditional schools into modern ones;

1.2 Higher education institutions and research & development as the driving forces in the development of a knowledge-based society.

Higher education institutions can also apply for both the development of infrastructure and the support of research and development from the European Regional Development Fund and Operational Programme Research and Development managed by the Ministry of Education.

Although the potential to gain from European structural funds is enormous, there is a risk that a lot of quality project managers disappointed by the administrative load and extensive bureaucracy caused by failures of managing authorities within the previous programming period will resign to be replaced by inexperienced or lower quality project staff.

9.2 Funding for continuing vocational education and training, and adult learning

9.2.1 Funding for publicly provided CVET

Act No. 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (*Zákon č. 386/1997 Z. z. o ďalšom vzdelávaní*) lists 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. are not specified either. See more details about types of sources in Table 51. The data presented represents the distribution of sources of financing CVET in 1997-2008 resulting from a CVET providers’ survey conducted on an annual basis by the Institute of Information and Planning (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*).

Table 51: Distribution of sources of financing of CVET* in 1997-2008 (in % and 1000s EUR)

Type of sources	1997	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	1000s EUR
State budget subsidies	17	21	24	23	36.36	21.34	23.82	25.88	14.68	6 939.36
Extra-budgetary sources	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00
Employers	30	18	13	14	13.34	22.04	23.83	18.44	25.93	12 253.06
Trainees	25	36	43	38	39.30	35.09	25.46	38.70	28.97	13 687.97
Labour offices	9	6	10	8	7.07	9.15	4.00	2.65	4.41	2 081.69
Donations of natural and legal persons	1	2	2	2	0.46	0.23	-	-	-	0.00
Municipalities	-	-	-	-	-	2.11	2.33	3.02	1.70	805.00
Other activities of educational institutions	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00
Foundations	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.78	1.36	0.97	460.66
EU funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.61	7.95	21.56	10 189.67
Others	9	9	8	15	3.47	10.03	5.17	1.99	1.77	838.52
Total	100	47 255.93								

Source: ÚIPŠ

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, 941 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.

No particular bodies are identifiable as particularly responsible for publicly funding CVET. As a rule, institutions publicly offering CVET fully cover costs from its institutional budget or, more often, they require cofinancing by participants. This data only allows identification of major contributors. It should be noted that the highest share in financing CVET came from trainees, followed by employers and EU funds.

Financing formal CVET usually comes from individuals interested in obtaining qualification rather than individuals interested in increasing their employability or willing to increase their competitiveness at the market. It is estimated that the per-trainee expenditures are similar to the per-student costs in initial VET and to other, similar formal education programmes. Non-formal education, of which language and ICT training are the most popular, is subject to free competition in the market. Therefore, prices vary, i.e. they territorially reflect the purchasing power of inhabitants as costs are to be fully covered by trainees.

The regulation of tertiary part-time studies is very specific (and criticised in practice). At public higher education institutions, part-time studies are provided both for free and for fees. Following the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. (*Zákon č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách*) the number of students accepted for part-time studies cannot exceed the number of full-time students accepted by a higher education institution for the respective academic year. Government regulations determine the total amount of funds from the state budget for the respective academic year and for individual institutions of

higher education. Based upon the set limits, each higher education institution decides upon the number of students in respective study programmes who will be accepted for free. Additional part-time students can be accepted on a fee-paying basis. There is also an option that legally constituted bodies interested in the employment of a respective student can make agreements with the student for future employment and for covering their costs of study.

In the light of the low proportion of adults in LLL (permanently below 5 % since 2003 according to Eurostat LFS data on participation of 25-64 olds in education and training), there have been increased discussions on how to promote CVET/LLL and re-think fiscal incentives.

The Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) adopted in 2007 again reiterated the introduction of financial tools for the development of LLL (in its measure 8.15), however without any concrete proposal of financing the scheme. There were some efforts to introduce fiscal incentives into the draft act on LLL, but it is very likely that funding for CVET/LLL will remain neither regulated nor fiscally promoted by any specific legislation in the nearest period.

9.2.2 Funding for CVT in enterprises

There are no specific measures and even no reliable statistical data on supply-led and demand-led funding of CVT. 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.

Aggregate data indicates that the share of training enterprises is close to EU27 data and confirms the earlier assumption that the share of training enterprises increases with the size class of enterprises, similarly to other EU countries.

Table 52: Training enterprises as % of all enterprises, by size class in 2005

	Total	10 to 49 employees	50 to 249 employees	250 or more employees
EU27	60	55	78	91
Slovakia	60	56	74	92

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS3, 2005)

Large enterprises offer more training opportunities than SMEs, usually due to the introduction of an 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 can be seen in Table 53 below.

Table 53: Total costs of CVT sources as % of total labour cost (all enterprises), by size class in 2005

	Total	10 to 49 employees	50 to 249 employees	250 or more employees
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 it, as a result of state aid incentives aimed at attracting them to settle in Slovakia.

Table 54: Enterprises with 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), date of extraction: 21st August 2008

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

Interestingly, in the light of the importance of CVT within the flexicurity approach towards labour market policy, a huge difference can be seen in the share of enterprises with a training centre (Table 55).

Table 55: Enterprises with a training centre used exclusively or partly for CVT as % of all enterprises by size class in 2005 (any type of training, in %)

	Total	10 to 49 employees	50 to 249 employees	250 or more employees
EU27	12	10	17	33
Slovakia	4	4	4	20
Denmark	47	41	68	89

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS3, 2005), date of extraction: 21st August 2008

9.3 Funding for training for unemployed people and other groups excluded from the labour market

The Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) tools (see part 5.3 for specification) were funded by the state budget and by the European Social Fund within the so-called national projects addressing disadvantaged groups. They were designed and managed by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (ÚPSVaR, *Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*) with an execution decentralised to respective labour offices, within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources addressing all regions except the Bratislava Region and within the Single Programming Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3. Thus, twin national projects were implemented to address two eligible territories in parallel. The following table depicts national projects in relation to VET designed for the 2004-2006 programming period and implemented until 2008.

Table 56: National projects aimed at training of unemployed and others vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market

Title of the national project (NP) 2004-2006 (2008)	Relevance to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services (<i>Zákon č. 5/2004 Z. z. o službách zamestnanosti</i>)
NP III – Education and training of the unemployed for the labour market followed by the modified NP III A - Education and training for the labour market and employee practice since 2007	§ 46 education and training for the labour market for the job seeker and the job changer
NP IX – School leaver’s job experience (graduate practice)	§ 51 allowance for carrying out school leaver’s job experience
NP XI – Theoretical and practical training of employees for acquiring new knowledge and professional skills	§ 47 education and training for the labour market of employee

Source: ÚPSVaR

Since 2004, a state-managed network of 46 Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family headed by the ÚPSVaR and labour market polices became regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. Active labour market policies were covered from the state budget via the ÚPSVaR as well as from the European Social Fund.

The following table offers the list of active labour market policies related to the respective paragraphs (see explanation below the table) of the Act on Employment Services and their results in 2004 to 2008.

Table 57: Funding active labour market policies in 2004, 2007 and 2008

ALMP tools	People affected or places created			Budget assigned (in EUR)			Average contribution per place or per person (in EUR)		
	2004	2007	2008	2004	2007	2008	2004	2007	2008
§ 32	- *	- *	3 207	- *	- *	29 718.5	- *	- *	9.3
§ 43(7)	- *	- *	524	- *	- *	5 718.5	- *	- *	10.9
§ 43(10)	- *	- *	129	- *	- *	1 733.5	- *	- *	13.4
§ 43(11)	- *	- *	5	- *	- *	132.7	- *	- *	26.5
§ 46	27 208	8 890	12 143	5 455 898.5	1 923 460.1	3 399 552.1	200.5	216.4	280.0
§ 47	- *	12 537	13 863	- *	7 097 743.8	7 757 412.9	- *	566.1	559.6
§ 48b	- *	- *	1 693	- *	- *	365 945.4	- *	- *	216.2
§ 49	5 618	10 038	12 096	8 250 424.5	20 647 259.6	30 584 195.0	1468.6	2 056.9	2 528.5
§ 49a	- *	- *	65	- *	- *	30 492.0	- *	- *	469.1
§ 50	1 778	2 550	1 016	2 823 537.4	6 241 442.9	2 283 860.6	1588.0	2 447.6	2 247.9
§ 50a	- *	- *	820	- *	- *	2 705 232.6	- *	- *	3 299.1
§ 51	14 462	8 937	13 435	5 152 065.6	2 526 441.7	4 394 445.1	356.2	282.7	327.1
§ 52	219 876	257 299	166 630	25 414 077.6	27 624 551.3	25 339 186.7	115.6	107.4	152.1
§ 52a	- *	- *	16 599	- *	- *	12 024 097.1	- *	- *	724.4
§ 53	51	- *	12 311	11 820.5	- *	1 332 627.9	231.8	- *	108.2
§ 53a	- *	- *	6	- *	- *	2 487.8	- *	- *	414.6
§ 54	- *	- *	8227	- *	- *	3 888 328.6	- *	- *	472.6
§ 56	138	862	739	359 044.6	4 926 230.8	4 783 193.7	2601.8	5 714.9	6 472.5
§ 56a	- *	- *	189	- *	- *	94 908.9	- *	- *	502.2
§ 57	107	389	337	275 596.0	2 496 066.3	2 255 354.1	2575.7	6 416.6	6 692.4
§ 59	18	73	159	53 850.9	356 504.3	783 105.8	2991.7	4 883.6	4 925.2
§ 60	- *	2 674	6 592	0.0	3 761 704.0	10 806 747.0	- *	1 406.8	1 639.4
§ 110	4 098	- *	- *	3 269 257.3	- *	- *	797.8	- *	- *
Total	273 354	304 249	270 785	50 789 976.9	77 601 404.9	112 868 476.6	185.8	255.1	416.8

Source: ÚPSVaR

Notes: EUR 1 = SKK 38.796 as of 31st December 2004; EUR 1 = SKK 33.603 as of 31st December 2007; EUR 1 = SKK 33.014 as of 31st December 2008, * not implemented

§ 32 – Mediating employment (in particular contribution to travel costs of job seeker related with entry interview with employer), § 43(7) Contribution to travel costs of job seekers related with attendance in activities focused on guidance and counselling services for job seekers, § 43(10) Payment of accommodation, meals and travel costs for job seekers/interested in change attending activities focused on guidance and counselling services for job seekers that last more than three days, § 43(11) Contribution to services for families with children for job seekers/interested in change attending activities focused on guidance and counselling, § 46 Education and training for the labour market of the job seeker and person interested in employment, § 47 Education and training for the labour market of employee, § 48b Provision of benefits during training for the labour market and preparation for assertion at the labour market of disabled citizen, § 49 Contribution for self-employment, § 49a Contribution for adjusting to working conditions of disadvantaged job seeker, § 50 Contribution for employing a disadvantaged job seeker, § 50a Contribution to provide support in maintaining employees with low wages in jobs, § 51 Contribution for the graduate practice, § 52 Contribution for activation activity, § 52a Contribution for activation activities carried out through voluntary services, § 53 Contribution for commuting to work, § 53a Contribution for moving to work, § 54 Programmes and projects (focused on verification of newly implemented active labour market policy measures), § 56 Contribution for establishing and maintaining the sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace, § 56a Contribution for maintaining a disabled citizen in a job, § 57 Contribution for operating or performing self-employment to disabled citizens, § 59 Contribution for activities of the assistant at work, § 60 Contribution to cover operating costs of the sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace and employees' transport costs; § 110 of the older act on employment (387/1996 Coll.) subsidies for sheltered workshops and workplaces.

A gradual decrease in training for the labour market in the share of total ALMP investment to 2006 is transparently visible from the table below (see § 46), followed by a slight improvement. At the same time, an increase in the funding of education and training of employees (§ 47) aimed at improving employability and preventing unemployment of already working people can be seen below.

Table 58: Distribution of active labour market policies means in 2004 to 2008 (%)

ALMP tools	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
§ 32	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.03
§ 43(7)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.01
§ 43(10)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00*
§ 43(11)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00**
§ 46	10.7	10.6	2.1	2.5	3.01
§ 47	0.0	0.0	0.8	9.1	6.87
§ 48b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.32
§ 49	16.2	24.3	26.2	26.6	27.10
§ 49a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.03
§ 50	5.6	9.2	10.3	8.0	2.02
§ 50a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.40
§ 51	10.1	13.5	5.4	3.3	3.89
§ 52	50.0	33.4	42.5	35.6	22.45
§ 52a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.65
§ 53	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.18
§ 53a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00***
§ 54	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.45
§ 56	0.7	2.2	4.4	6.3	4.24
§ 56a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.08
§ 57	0.5	1.7	3.0	3.2	2.00
§ 59	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.69
§ 60	0.0	4.4	4.7	4.8	9.57
§ 110	6.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.00
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00

Source: ÚPSVaR

Notes: * 0.0015, ** 0.0001, *** 0.0022

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 employers replacing the former National Projects III and XI is in the process of elaboration and is expected to be launched in 2009. School leaver's job experience (Graduate practice) is not to be financed from European money anymore and therefore the follow up to the NP IX will not be prepared. On the other hand graduate practice is considered an important tool for fighting graduate unemployment that is expected to increase. Therefore, additional funding from the state budget and even more friendly conditions for enrolment are expected.

Any changes (requiring amendment of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services) reflect the following – revision (adding or removing) respective tools (paragraphs as depicted in the table above and other tables in part 5.3), status of respective measure/tools (obligatory or not obligatory as commented in part 5.3). Furthermore, benefits are the subject of changes. As a rule, there is no discrimination according to ownership of entities providing employment services agreed with labour offices and covered from the ALMP central budget. Similarly, there is no discrimination according to ownership concerning access to contributions and other benefits in support of employment. Nevertheless, there is a lot of space for respective labour offices to bypass official rules, if they wish to do so. Decisive influence of political parties and local players cannot be excluded as the decision process can hardly be strictly regulated. On the other hand, improving transparency rules make any case of positive or negative discrimination the subject of public debating as media enjoy commenting on any examples of irregularities.

9.4 General funding arrangements and mechanisms

VET funding arrangements are very simple. IVET is dominantly funded from the state budget and CVET from the pocket of the interested players (employers or individual participants). Labour market retraining is financed from the state budget and from the ESF. A debate about additional funding mechanisms with clear incentives to private entities positive towards funding VET goes back to the early 1990s. Initially, a train-or-pay VET fund was considered appropriate and later tax reliefs 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 *inter alia* a tax relief scheme for employers, aimed at increasing their investment in training for their employees.

The Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance (*Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva*) adopted in 2007 suggested the introduction of financial tools for the development of LLL in its measure 8.15.

The debate continues, dominated by two basic fundamentals of all Slovak governments. Efficient tax policy is considered incompatible with any kind of tax related incentives for VET/LLL, and governments are unable to reduce 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 (MF, *Ministerstvo financií*) opposes all proposals for tax incentives in support of IVET and/or continuing VET for individuals, considering that the flat tax reform, introducing a 19 % tax rate for VAT, income tax and corporate tax, a sufficient stimulus for encouraging investment in human resources and/or own education.

There are no sectoral training funds implemented. In 2010 a VET fund will be established according to Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET (*Zákon č. 184/2009 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní*). In contrast to a levy-type fund used in other EU countries and promoted by a professional audience, the VET fund presided by the minister of education cannot receive funding from state authorities and funding from businesses is strictly on a voluntary basis. As the Ministry of Finance strictly opposed creating a fund as lowering state budget income, employers accepted only non-obligatory contributions. This fund is viewed controversially, as a lack of resources is expected under the current terms. In addition, VET schools are afraid of worsening their ability to earn from businesses. Currently, schools fight for contributions from businesses based on a specific tax credit measure introduced originally to support NGOs. Schools created affiliated NGOs in order to apply for additional funding, e.g. 2 % of the income tax and corporate tax. Many schools are very successful in attracting enteritis with a special interest (parents, businesses from similar sector, etc.). Schools are afraid that political manipulation might result in funnelling funding from businesses to the VET fund instead of directly to them.

There is only one example where government adopted a measure based on tax relief, disregarding the criticism of the National Bank of Slovakia and the Ministry of Finance. In the light of the brain drain of medical staff to better paying EU countries, the government decided to adopt a measure prepared by the Ministry of Health (MZ, *Ministerstvo zdravotníctva*) aimed at the stimulation of continuing professional development of medical staff in order to fill the gap of specialists. The measure has been valid since 1st January 2008, thus tax deduction applies 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 (*Zákon č. 578/2004 Z. z. o zdravotnej starostlivosti, službách súvisiacich s poskytovaním zdravotnej starostlivosti*) and Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on Income Tax (*Zákon č. 595/2003 Z. z. o dani z príjmov*) 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 deductible items. A decree of the Ministry of Health No. 31/2006 Coll. sets upper limits for 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 on study programmes set and accredited by the Ministry of Health are reduced by about one fifth. The parliament broke a taboo by this measure concerning tax incentives for continuing training/lifelong learning¹⁶.

Similarly to the health sector, there are sectoral regulations detailing qualification requirements for diverse professions, however without similar fiscal incentives. Of course it is up to the employers to

¹⁶ See Parliament Breaks a Taboo: Tax Incentives for Lifelong Learning. In: Cedefop Info 1/2008.

apply some, if appropriate. According to § 155 of the Labour Code the employer is entitled to sign an agreement with the employee in which the employee commits himself/herself to remain in employment for a certain period (maximum 5 years), otherwise the relevant costs of the employer (up to 75 % of the total costs) have to be reimbursed.

Tax incentives for CVET for individuals from other professions are not applied. The aforementioned 2 % tax relief for NGOs has only secondary influence on VET and it was not intended to support of VET.

Learning accounts and vouchers were discussed only academically with no serious debate among decision makers.

Saving schemes and loans aimed at VET are also not in place. There are scholarships, mentioned also above, to assist low income families to co-finance the costs of living of students but they are not VET specific and in addition they are not widely used. A Student Loan Fund has started to provide loans since the 1995/1996 academic year. From then till the 2007/2008 academic year, 53 670 loans were provided in a total amount of EUR 44 270 305.05. Any student qualifies for a single loan of EUR 663.88 (SKK 20 000). Higher loans of EUR 1 327.76 (SKK 40 000) are means tested. In addition to these so-called “social stipends” for higher education students, also the so-called “motivation stipends” are available for secondary students whose parents are in material need or below subsistence minimum aimed at improving the access of these students to education and make them more involved in their education¹⁷.

10. National VET statistics – allocation of programmes

10.1 Classification of national VET programmes

10.1.1 Main criteria used to allocate VET programmes

All VET programmes are coded according to a statistical classification of study and training branches set by the Decree of the Statistical Office SR No. 559/2008 Coll. on classification of education branches (*Vyhláška Štatistického úradu Slovenskej republiky č. 559/2008 Z. z., ktorou sa vydáva Štatistická klasifikácia odborov vzdelania*), containing also a respective ISCED code. Subsequently, all state educational programme documents and respective school educational programme documents derived from them are labelled with an ISCED code.

Until 2008 when the new Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (*Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon)*) came into force, ISCED codes were dominantly used in the statistical practice of the education sector only. A respective conversion table between ISCED and national classification was elaborated by the Institute of Information and Planning (ÚIPŠ, *Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva*) in particular with regard to UOE harmonised data delivery.

For specific explanations concerning post-secondary non tertiary education and ISCED 5B categories see the definition of tertiary and higher education in part 1.5.

Nevertheless, since 2000 all national statistics of ÚIPŠ about primary, secondary, tertiary education and CVET is also offered according to ISCED 97, while educational statistics published by the Statistical Office (ŠÚ, *Štatistický úrad*) within annual yearbooks is based on the national Classification of Education Branches (KOV, *klasifikácia odborov vzdelania*), which is widely used also in labour market statistics (e.g. in graduates unemployment statistics). The conversion table between the two classifications is below.

¹⁷ See VET Policy Report: Slovak Republic 2008: Progress in the Policy Priority Areas for Vocational Education and Training, policy example in part 2.3.2.; see also a measure to promote mobility in selected EU countries in part 7.5.2. of the same report.

Table 59: Conversion table between ISCED and national classification (5th digit of 7 digit KOV full code)

NC	Description	ISCED
0	Completed compulsory education in a grade lower than final grade of ZŠ	0, 1
1	Completed basic or secondary education (except secondary education stated in points 2 and 3)	2, 2C
2	secondary vocational education finishing with a certificate of apprenticeship acquired at SOŠ* and at vocational schools**	3C
3	Secondary education (study in less than four-year programmes, without “maturita”)	3C
4	Full secondary vocational education (study at SOŠ*** finishing with “maturita”)	3A
5	Full secondary general education (study at grammar school finishing with “maturita”)	3A
6	Full secondary vocational education (study at SOŠ**** or conservatory finishing with “maturita”, and diverse “post-maturita” studies not finishing with “absolutorium”)	3A, 4A
7	First level of tertiary education – bachelor, and higher professional education (post-secondary not tertiary finishing with “absolutorium”)	5
8	Second level of tertiary education – master (magister, engineer, doctor)	5
9	Third level of tertiary education	6

Source: Classification of Education Branches (KOV) according to the Statistical Office, descriptions and respective ISCED codes allocated by authors.

Notes: ZŠ basic school (*základná škola*)

SOŠ secondary specialised school (*stredná odborná škola*)

* till 2008 labelled as training branches at secondary vocational schools (SOU, *stredné odborné učilište*), since 2008 training branches at SOŠ

** schools for students with special educational needs within the stream of special schools able to achieve it despite the handicap

*** till 2008 programmes labelled as study branches at SOU and since 2008 labelled as study branches with vocational training at SOŠ

**** since 2008 programmes labelled as study branches with practice at SOŠ

As can be seen above, the national Classification of Education Branches is education programme based and increasing numbers in coding does not fully correspond with levels of education according to educational legislation. Gradual transition to ISCED is expected nationally and all sector wide, as also seen in the aforementioned Decree of the Statistical Office No. 559/2008 Coll. mentioning also ISCED codes in the full (7 digit) list of branches in contrast to the earlier version of a similar decree.

10.1.2 VET levels in the national educational system

With the coming into force of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. levels of education have been substantially changed.

Since September 2008 the general education comprises three levels: primary education - after completing 4th year of basic school; lower secondary (general) - after completing 9th year of basic school or respective class of longer form of grammar school and full secondary general - after completing a grammar school. Levels of VET including tertiary programme levels adjusted to the Bologna declaration are presented in the table below.

Table 60: VET levels in the national educational system

Level	ISCED	Minimum duration	Maximum duration	Typical duration*	Typical starting age of pupils
Lower secondary vocational	2C	2 years	3 years	2	15-16
Secondary vocational	3C	3 years	4 years	3	15
Full secondary vocational**	3A	4 years	5 years	4***	15
Higher professional	5B	2 years	3 years	2,3	19
Higher education 1 st level (Bachelor)	5A	3 years	4 years	3	19
Higher education 2 nd level (Master)	5A	2 years	3 years****	2****	22
Higher education (PhD)	6	3 years	4 years*****	-	24-25*****

Notes: * average duration is not an appropriate indicator as there are only two options of duration

** there are diverse post-secondary programmes not leading to higher level of education, e.g. post-secondary studies lasting at least 6 months (refresher) labelled ISCED 4A or post-secondary studies lasting 2 years (qualifying) labelled ISCED 4A; starting age of pupils differs, often it is 19 in full-timers and usually more in case of part-timers.

*** this level can also be obtained after 2 years follow-up study after completing education leading to secondary vocational level (ISCED 3C), but there are also genuine more demanding programmes requiring 5 years of study

**** there are some master studies not following bachelor studies (e.g. medical studies lasting 6 years in total)

***** in part-time form lasting 5 years students are usually older, in contrast to full-time students entering 3 years lasting study usually immediately after achieving the master level; however this is not obligatory.

10.2 Fields of education and training

The respective fields of education and training are classified according to the aforementioned national Classification of Education Branches (KOV, *klasifikácia odborov vzdelania*) in the table below offering an overview of study fields from lower secondary to tertiary level.

Table 61: VET programmes by fields of education and training

Code	Field according to national classification (KOV) *	ISCED 97						
		2C	3C	3A, 4	5B	5A-1 st	5A-2 nd	6
1	<i>Natural sciences</i>							
11	Physical-mathematical sciences	0	0	1**	0	1	1	1
12	Geological sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
13	Geographical sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
14	Chemical sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
15	Biological sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
16	Environment protection	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
2	<i>Technical sciences</i>							
21	Mining and mining geology	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
22	Metallurgy	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
23	Engineering and other metal-processing I	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
24	Engineering and other metal-processing II	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
25	Informatics and computing technology	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
26	Electrotechnics	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
27	Technical chemistry of silicate chemistry	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
28	Technical chemistry (w/o silicate chemistry)	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
29	Food-processing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	<i>Technical sciences</i>							
31	Textile and clothing	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
32	Processing of hides, plastics, rubber, shoe production	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
33	Wood-processing and musical instruments production	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
34	Pulp, paper processing and printing	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
35	Architecture	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

36	Building, geodesy and cartography	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
37	Transport, post and telecommunication	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
38	Automation and regulation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
39	Special technical specialisations	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
4	<i>Agricultural-forestry and veterinary sciences</i>							
41	Agricultural-forestry science	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
42	Agriculture, forestry and rural development I	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
43	Veterinary sciences	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
45	Agriculture, forestry and rural development II	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
5	<i>Healthcare</i>							
51	Medical sciences	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
52	Pharmaceutical sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
53	Healthcare branches at secondary health schools	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
56	Non-medical healthcare sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
6	<i>Social sciences and services</i>							
61	Philosophical sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
62	Economic sciences	0	0	0***	0	1	1	1
63	Economics and organisation, retail and services I	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
64	Economics and organisation, retail and services II	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
67	Political sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
68	Legal sciences	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
7	<i>Social sciences and services</i>							
71	Historical sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
72	Library and information sciences	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
73	Philological sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
74	Physical culture sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
75	Pedagogical sciences	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
76	Teacher training	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
77	Psychological sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
78	Teacher training – subject combination	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
79	Full secondary education at grammar schools	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
8	<i>Sciences on culture and arts</i>							
81	Arts sciences	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
82	Arts, applied arts and folk crafts I	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
85	Arts, applied arts and folk crafts II	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
9	<i>Military and security sciences</i>							
91	Military engineering and electrotechnics branches	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
92	Security services	0	0	1**	0	1	1	1
94	Non-state security services	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
96	Military branches	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
97	Military building and transport branches	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
98	Military economic branches	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Source: Decree of the Statistical Office No. 559/2008 Coll. on classification of education branches and a Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 314/2008 Coll. on Secondary Schools (*Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 314/2008 Z. z. o stredných školách*)

Notes: 0 – non-existing programme, 1 – existing programme

* overarching codes 2 and 3 as well as 6 and 7 have an identical title

** just ISCED 4A

*** a study programme on ISCED 4A level will be included since September 2009

5A-1st – bachelor programmes

5A-2nd – master (magister, engineer, doctor) programmes

5B – post-secondary programmes offered by secondary specialised schools only

The following table offers fields of tertiary education according to ISCED together with the newest data on participants. Similar statistics for secondary and post-secondary education is not available.

Table 62: Students enrolled in tertiary programmes in the 2005/2006 academic year

Fields of education	All tertiary (ISCED 5+6)	5A	5B	6
Total: All fields of education	197 943	184 380	2 824	10 739
Education (ISCED 14)	32 570	31 488	279	803
Teacher training (ISCED 141)	25 742	25 463	279	n
Education science (ISCED 142)	6 828	6 025	n	803
Humanities and Arts	11 879	10 200	503	1 176
Arts (ISCED 21)	3 464	2 593	503	368
Humanities (ISCED 22)	8 415	7 607	n	808
Social sciences, business and law	56 056	53 630	301	2 125
Social and behavioural science (ISCED 31)	8 978	8 292	n	686
Journalism and information (ISCED 32)	3 940	3 867	n	73
Business and administration (ISCED 34)	34 132	32 779	301	1 052
Law (ISCED 38)	9 006	8 692	n	314
Science	17 910	16 281	66	1 563
Life sciences (ISCED 42)	4 761	4 165	n	596
Physical sciences (ISCED 44)	3 841	3 352	n	489
Mathematics and statistics (ISCED 46)	1 422	1 175	n	247
Computing (ISCED 48)	7 886	7 589	66	231
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	32 439	29 684	87	2 668
Engineering and engineering trades (ISCED 52)	20 980	19 167	61	1 752
Manufacturing and processing (ISCED 54)	3 579	3 145	26	408
Architecture and building (ISCED 58)	7 880	7 372	n	508
Agriculture	5 533	5 104	60	369
Agriculture, forestry and fishery (ISCED 62)	4 732	4 385	60	287
Veterinary (ISCED 64)	801	719	n	82
Health and welfare	30 036	27 580	908	1 548
Health (ISCED 72)	18 159	15 935	832	1 392
Social services (ISCED 76)	11 877	11 645	76	156
Services	11 520	10 413	620	487
Personal services (ISCED 81)	3 229	2 498	560	171
Transport services (ISCED 84)	2 976	2 800	42	134
Environmental protection (ISCED 85)	1 494	1 471	n	23
Security services (ISCED 86)	3 821	3 644	18	159

Source: ÚIPS, UOE data

As already mentioned ISCED 5B data in the table above refer to graduates from higher professional studies offered by secondary specialised schools completed by an “absolutorium”. There are no tertiary ISCED 5B programmes currently offered as also indicated within the next chapter.

10.3 Links between national qualifications and international qualifications or classifications

The National Qualification Framework (NQF) does not exist yet, however, its implementation process has already started based on Government Resolution No. 105/2009 of 4th February 2009 (for details see part 2.2.).

A Memorandum on Cooperation between the ministries of education and labour was signed on 27th October 2009 in order to facilitate the alignment of the proposed renewed national system of qualification to the new national system of occupations, both merging into the National Registers. The elaboration of the National Register of Occupation is already in progress under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR, *Ministerstvo práce, sociálních věcí a rodiny*) co-financed by the ESF. The elaboration of the National Register of Qualification is however pending as the start of the ESF project aimed at the renewal of the national qualification system has been delayed.

Nevertheless, the system of secondary VET programmes has been in the process of renewal since 2008 and the commitment of the government to create NQF till the end of 2011 remain valid. All relevant documents should include reference to the respective EQF (NQF) level by the end of 2012 in order to comply with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council.

A working group for the implementation of EQF has been created and the first contribution to the elaboration of NQF mapping (conversion table between NSQ and EQF) was done with completion of the referencing process due by December 2011, according to the Ministry of Education. Below is the draft proposal of the Slovak National Observatory of VET submitted to the national EQF working group. Based on the request it only covers the education sector in terms of levels of education as stipulated by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. and Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. Subsequent full mapping of qualifications will require broader cooperation of experts from other sectors. The date when all learning settings (and not just formal learning) will be covered by the NQF will also depend on the progress in the ESF project on NSQ, to be launched in 2010 and conducted by Academia Istropolitana.

Table 63: Basic* proposal of table for the National Qualification Framework (NQF)

NQF level (proposal)**	ISCED level	Legislation ***	Titles, names of study programmes or schools
8	6	3 rd VŠ	PhD., ArtD., ThDr.**** ; doctoral
7	5A	2 nd VŠ	Mgr., Mgr. art. / Ing; Ing. arch./ MUDr., MVDr., MDDr.; Master
6	5A	1 st VŠ	Bc., Bachelor
6	5B	-	Currently not offered tertiary education
6	5B	VOV	DiS, higher professional study (2-3 years) finishing with “absolutorium”
6	5B	VOV	DiS.art conservatory after 6 th year, dance conservatory after 8 th year finishing with “absolutorium”
6	5B	VOV	DiS; “post-maturita” specialising study (at least 2 years) finishing with “absolutorium”
5 (5+)	4A	ÚSOV	“Post-maturita” qualifying study (at least 2 years) finishing with the second “maturita” school leaving exam
5 (5+)	4A	ÚSOV	“Post-maturita” developing and refresher study (at least 6 months) at SOŠ finishing with a final exam
5	3A	ÚSOV	4-5 year programme at SOŠ with “maturita” (or also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship)
5	3A	ÚSOV	Conservatory after 4 th year (“maturita”)
5	3A	ÚSOV	Follow-up study (as a rule 2 years) following completed secondary vocational education (training branch) finishing with “maturita”
5	3A	ÚSVV	“Maturita” from grammar school
4	3C	SOV	3-4 year programme with a final exam (usually also with a Certificate of Apprenticeship)
3	2C	NSOV	2-year programme at SOŠ with a final exam (or also with a “quasi” Certificate of Apprenticeship)
2	2	ZV-NS	Completing the second stage of basic school, 4 th year of 8-year grammar school, 1 st year of bilingual secondary school, 4 th year of dance conservatory
1	1	ZV-P	Completing the first stage of education at basic school

Notes: VŠ – higher (*vysokoškolské*), VOV – higher professional education (*vyššie odborné vzdelanie*); ÚSOV – full secondary vocational education (*úplné stredné odborné vzdelanie (vyššie sekundárne)*), SOV – secondary vocational education (*stredné odborné vzdelanie (sekundárne)*); ÚSVV – full secondary general education (*úplné stredné všeobecné vzdelanie (vyššie sekundárne)*), NSOV – lower secondary vocational education (*nižšie stredné odborné vzdelanie (nižšie sekundárne)*); ZV-NS - basic education - lower secondary (*základné vzdelanie - nižšie stredné*), ZV-P – basic education - primary (*základné vzdelanie – primárne*), SOŠ – secondary specialised school (*stredná odborná škola*)

* So far reflecting just legislatively set levels of education and not qualifications as would be desirable; and other indicators of higher level of competence, and thus e.g. it does not cover examina rigorosa based awards which are linked to prior intensive self-study; it does not cover § 17 of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (addressing levels of education attained within basic art education and language education) and programmes within special education and other sectors (e.g. healthcare – Regulation of the Government No. 12/2008 Coll.); it does not cover continuing education and so far it does not address outputs from other than formal education setting.

** In further detailing to sub-levels we propose to distinguish at each level an “upper sub-level (plus)” to cover any additional formal or non-formal education not leading to recognition of higher level of education, and thus not appropriate for inclusion into a higher level within the NQF, and also e.g. education that will lead to recognition of partial qualification according to the future act on LLL, or other sectoral norms.

*** Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll.; and Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. (§ 16 – levels of education)

**** Catholic Theology only

11. Authors, sources, bibliography, acronyms and abbreviations

11.1 Authors

Juraj Vantuch, Faculty of Education, Comenius University

Dagmar Jelínková, State Institute of Vocational Education

with direct contribution from

Štefan Grajcár, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Theme 8)

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www.nsr.sk

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www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=639

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www.akredkom.sk

Association of Adult Education Institutions in the SR (Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR, AIVD)

www.aivd.sk

Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce sociálnych vecí a rodiny, ÚPSVaR)

www.upsvar.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 Typal Positions (Integrovaný systém typových pozícií, ISTP)

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www.siov.sk

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www.statistics.sk

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www.trexima.sk

11.3 List of acronyms and abbreviations

AIVD	Asociácia inštitúcií vzdelávania dospelých v SR (Association of Adult Education Institutions in the SR)
AK	Akreditačná komisia vlády Slovenskej republiky (Accreditation Commission of the Slovak Republic Government)
AK MŠ	Akreditačná komisia Ministerstva školstva (Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education)
ALMP	Active labour market policy
AZZZ	Asociácia zamestnávateľských zväzov a združení Slovenskej republiky (Federation of the Employers' Association of Slovakia)
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Framework
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
DPŠ	Doplňujúce pedagogické štúdium (complementary pedagogical study)
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET
ENQA-VET	European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
G	Gymnázium (grammar school)
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 Typal Positions)
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
IVPR	Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny (Institute of Labour and Family Research)
JŠ	Jazyková škola (language school)
KOV	Klasifikácia odborov vzdelania (classification of education branches)
KOZ	Konfederácia odborových zväzov (Confederation of Trade Unions)
KZAM	Klasifikácia zamestnaní (classification of occupations)
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLG	Lifelong guidance
LLL	Lifelong learning
MF	Ministerstvo financií (Ministry of Finance)
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)
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
NSQ	National System of Qualifications
OP	Operational Programme
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QMS	Quality management system
R&D	Research and development
RÚZ	Republiková únia zamestnávateľov (National Union of Employers)
SITES	Second Information Technology in Education Study
SKK	Slovak crown (currency)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SOP	Sectoral Operational Programme
SOP	Stredisko odbornej praxe (centre of vocational practice)
SOŠ	Stredná odborná škola (secondary specialised school)

SOU	Stredné odborné učilište (secondary vocational school)
SPD	Single Programming Document
SPV	Stredisko praktického vyučovania (centre of practical training)
SŠ	Spojená škola (joined school)
ŠH	Školské hospodárstvo (school farm)
ŠIOV	Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania (State Institute of Vocational Education)
ŠPÚ	Štátny pedagogický ústav (National Institute for Education)
ŠÚ	Štatistický úrad (Statistical Office)
ŠVP	Štátny vzdelávací program (state educational 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 (Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)
VET	Vocational education and training
VÚDPaP	Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie (Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology)
ZMOS	Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska (Association on towns and municipalities of Slovakia)
ZSŠ	Združená stredná škola (associated secondary school)
ZŠ	Základná škola (basic school)
ZUŠ	Základná umelecká škola (basic school of arts)

Annex

Table 1: Employment by sectors (in thousands of people)

NACE category	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agriculture incl. fishing (A+B)	125.3	5.8	109.8	5.1	105.1	4.7	100.8	4.4	99.3	4.2	98	4.0
Industry incl. construction (C-F)	829.0	38.3	846.6	39.0	858.9	38.8	892.6	38.8	928.0	39.4	960.6	39.5
Service (G-Q)	1 208.3	55.8	1 210	55.8	1 248.6	56.3	1 306.4	56.8	1 329.6	56.4	1 375.1	56.5
Unknown	1.9	0.1	4.1	0.2	3.8	0.2	1.9	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.0
Total employed	2 164.6	100	2 170.4	100	2 216.2	100	2 301.4	100	2 357.3	100	2 433.8	100

Source: Statistical Office SR (ŠÚ, Štatistický úrad SR), LFS annual data

Table 2

Employment by level of education in 2004 - 2008 (in thousands)

Total	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
		2 170.4	2 216.2	2 301.4	2 357.3
ISCED 0-1	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0
ISCED 2	110.3	102.6	107.0	105.9	109.9
ISCED 3C (CoA)	728.1	700.5	738.7	756.6	769.4
ISCED 3C (without CoA)	48.7	55.8	56.2	61.3	60.5
ISCED 3A (MSLC) + CoA	111.9	115.5	120.6	123.7	126.0
ISCED 3A (MSLC) GEN	95.9	97.8	100.8	101.7	103.6
ISCED 3A (MSLC) VET	746.7	778.5	788.6	822.3	857.4
ISCED 5B	16.9	21.1	22.7	18.4	19.5
ISCED 5A - Bc	9.6	12.5	15.2	20.2	24.7
ISCED 5A - M	299.5	326.8	345.7	341.8	356.1
ISCED 6	2.9	5.2	5.9	5.6	6.6

Source: ŠÚ, LFS annual data

Notes: CoA – Certificate of Apprenticeship (výučný list), MSLC – “Maturita” School Leaving Certificate (vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške) GEN - general education stream, VET vocational stream

Bc- Bachelor, M- master

Table 3

Unemployment by level of education in 2004 - 2008 (in thousands)

Total	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
		480.7	427.5	353.4	291.9
ISCED 0-1	-	0.2	0.9	0.3	0.3
ISCED 2	115.5	116.0	99.0	85.2	71.6
ISCED 3C (CoA)	187.8	161.6	133.8	106.4	93.4
ISCED 3C (without CoA)	11.8	8.2	8.9	7.5	4.8
ISCED 3A (MSLC) + CoA	22.9	21.1	17.6	11.0	11.5
ISCED 3A (MSLC) GEN	15.9	14.5	10.5	10.2	8.6
ISCED 3A (MSLC) VET	106.4	86.7	69.8	55.4	52.0
ISCED 5B	2.1	1.9	0.7	1.5	1.2
ISCED 5A - Bc	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.8	1.2
ISCED 5A - M	17.8	16.3	11.5	13.3	12.7
ISCED 6	-	-	-	0.2	0.2

Source: ŠÚ, LFS annual data

Note: CoA – Certificate of Apprenticeship (výučný list), MSLC – “Maturita” School Leaving Certificate (vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške) GEN - general education stream, VET vocational stream

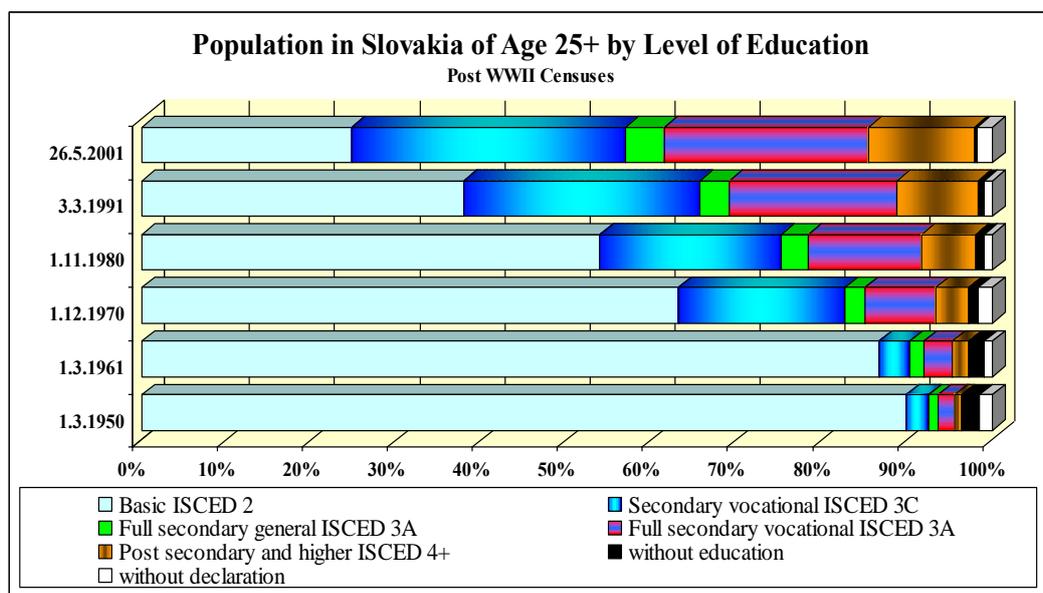
Bc- Bachelor, M- master

Table 4: Unemployment in 2003 - 2008

Year	Unemployed (LFS, Eurostat)	Unemployed (4Q LFS)		Disposable registered unemployed (31 st December)		Registered unemployed (31 st December)	
	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)
2003	17.6	458 200	17.4	413 086	15.6	452 224	16.7
2004	18.2	455 100	17.1	342 294	13.1	383 155	14.6
2005	16.3	407 600	15.3	293 801	11.4	333 834	12.9
2006	13.4	319 000	12.0	240 567	9.4	273 437	10.7
2007	11.1	275 300	10.3	207 863	8.0	239 939	9.2
2008	9.5	234 400	8.7	218 920	8.4	248 556	9.5

Source: ŠÚ (LFS), ÚPSVaR

Diagram 1



Source: ŠÚ, Census 2001