

Slovakia: Upskilling initiative for adult learners

On 14 February 2023, the labour ministry launched a campaign to encourage the participation of adults in upskilling and to raise awareness of the extended services offered by Labour Offices to adults to support their personal development.

Adults are urged to register with the Labour Offices and receive free guidance and training. Until the end of 2023, ESF funding is available for around 25 000 people who want to strengthen the relevance of their skills to increase their employability in their current or new job. Unlike the usual practice of focusing on the unemployed, Labour Offices strongly invite new target groups: the self-employed, those working in SMEs and those on maternity or parental leave. Applicants are free to select a course that matches their aspirations and labour market opportunities, provided it is an accredited course related to a specific occupation, or a course targeting portable skills offered by a registered provider. Once the application is approved by the Labour Office as well-justified, the applicant receives a voucher entitling the training provider to claim reimbursement for the course fee from the Labour Office. Courses are free of charge for learners, with an administrative burden on the training provider's and the Labour Office's side.

Don't lose your job – Educate yourself

The labour market initiative under this title was launched in 2021, but the content and target group has since opened up. According to an analysis of the active labour market policy instruments, this national ESF project funded courses amounting to a total of more than EUR 1.2 million in 2022 for people registered with the Labour Offices as employed but interested in retraining or counselling. Of the 4 015 people trained, 85% were men, with the highest proportion of trained people in eastern Slovakia. More than 80% of those trained were in the 25 to 49 age group. The retraining was initially aimed at increasing the supply of professions officially registered as lacking in the labour market, as well as at digital and green skills.

Boom after deregulation and Valentine's Day campaign

The philosophy of meeting labour market needs has changed. From November 2022, retraining for other jobs such as beautician, masseur, care worker, project manager or accountant has also been possible, leaving it up to individuals to assess their labour market prospects. An even wider expansion was announced with the Valentine's Day campaign in 2023. People who were not registered with Labour Offices were invited to register and receive guidance in any of the 46 Labour Offices. In addition, training opportunities were further expanded to highly skilled professionals and courses such as digital management or various crafts, including green ones, such as photovoltaic installation. It is up to the applicants to choose their type of training in line with their needs, which they need to justify in a six-item questionnaire included in the application.

Voucher scheme exploring new avenues

The labour ministry aligned this initiative of opening up adult learning to new target groups and skills with the European Year of Skills 2023. But this voucher scheme is not only a new opportunity for upskilling and reskilling. The [Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30](#), approved by the Government, and the new strategy document [New elements in skills development](#), published by the State Institute of Vocational Education, have set the framework for the implementation of microcredentials, and suggested piloting a potential replacement of the actual individual learning accounts with a voucher scheme. The monitoring and evaluation of the results of this voucher scheme could inform policy-makers

about the potential of these new policies and help them propose adapted, evidence-based measures.

Read more

- [Press conference announcing Valentine's Day gift for adult learners](#)
- [Application form for a training voucher](#)
- [Information on the Don't lose your job - Educate yourself project](#)

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