

## **Slovakia: VET school thrives within unique socio-ecosystem**

**Despite the systemic challenges of long-term underfinancing, gradual demographic decline and ageing VET staff facing Slovakia's VET schools, a secondary polytechnic VET school in Nitra is thriving through innovation. With over 50 years of tradition in offering education in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and economics, this private school is becoming a trendsetter by embracing innovative partnerships and attracting key investments.**

### **Well-rethought stakeholder cooperation drives transformation**

Stakeholder collaboration is at the heart of this success. The school's 'Haas Technologic Center', established with the support of CNC (computer numerical control) machine tool manufacturer Haas, provides access to cutting-edge technology. An EUR 134 000 grant from the Nitra self-governing region funded CNC machines, while Haas provided essential software and teacher training. This led to national recognition as a 'Centre of VET in CNC technology' in 2013.

In 2017, the Nitra self-governing region, which is the founder of most secondary schools in the region, agreed to lease the school's premises to 'Deutsch – Slowakische Akademien (DSA)', a private school network. As part of the German 'Europäisches Bildungswerk für Beruf und Gesellschaft' group (operating 36 schools and training centres in Germany), DSA provides the school with valuable German VET expertise and has invested in a modern training hall, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, delivered in two phases in 2021 and 2023.

The establishment of a Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) plant in the Nitra region provided a significant boost to the school's development. Since 2018, collaboration with JLR has resulted in significant benefits, including access to international know-how, study materials, and support in establishing standards for practical VET components. These benefits extend to partnerships with British vocational schools, creating a platform for learners to improve their English language skills.

### **Investing in a modern training environment**

About EUR 6.6 million were already invested of which about EUR 5.5 million from private sources and about EUR 1.1 million from EU sources, including co-financing from the State budget. For the purposes of practical training, a modern Regional Training Centre (RTC) with a total area of 3 445 m<sup>2</sup> was built, equipped with cutting-edge technology. It allows learners to work directly on robots which they will also encounter in real work. The mechatronic line and robots are exact copies of the equipment at the Jaguar Land Rover plant, only in a smaller version. German KUKA robots, Japanese FANUC robots, and ABB robots from a global leader in robotics and automation are available for learners to facilitate a smooth transition to the workplace. The creation and further building of the RTC since 2021 is part of the DSA policy that wants to support cooperation with companies and universities based on the German experience; the RTC in Nitra therefore serves many other companies in the Nitra region.

## A road to excellence

DSA, a certified employer in the dual VET system, has been awarded the title of Supra-Company Training Centre (STC) for mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and the automotive industry in 2022. There are only two STCs in Slovakia so far. Further awards of this distinction will be strictly assessed, as they must have a 'showcase' status in the industry. They should set trends in the provision of practical training, in cooperation with universities and in supporting adult learning, including professional development of VET staff.

Today, this secondary VET school is one of the most modern schools in Slovakia. It fully fulfils the vision proudly declared on its website: to be a school of the new generation for Industry 4.0 and to set trends in vocational education. Not surprisingly, the school is applying for the status of Centre of Vocational Excellence. Additional investment is envisaged from the European Regional Development Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Plan for the school to stay competitive and be able to network with EU counterparts on an equal footing.

## Outlook

Could this approach be adopted by public schools? Strengthened local partnerships depend on stakeholders and are relatively easy to achieve. However, stronger investment from the State budget needs political engagement and labour market intelligence-related expertise, which has been lacking for a long time.

## Read more

- [DSA VET school website](#)
- [DSA network](#)



Source: DSA



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