

Country Report SLOVAKIA

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1. Background and country context

National economy

Slovakia has transformed from a centrally planned economy to a modern market economy. Major privatisations are nearly complete and foreign investment has picked up. Slovakia is among the most attractive countries in the EU for foreign investors mainly because of its low labour costs (Slovakia has the lowest labour costs in the European Union) and low tax rates. Slovakia plans to adopt the European currency on 1 January 2009.

Multiple reasons entailed a GDP growth of 6 percent in 2005, the fourth highest rate in the EU after the three Baltic states. In 2006, Slovakia reached the highest economic growth among the members of OECD. Nevertheless the unemployment rate of 8.9 percent in March 2007 still remains among the highest in the EU.

Despite a sufficient number of researchers and a solid secondary educational system, Slovakia, as well as other post-communist countries, still faces many challenges in the field of modern knowledge society. The business and public research and development expenditures are deeply below EU average.

IVET and CVET

Slovakian pupils start secondary school after the primary school education, usually at the age of 15. The second stage of primary school in Slovakia is comparable with lower secondary education in other countries. The first year of secondary school attendance is usually the last year of compulsory education which lasts up to the end of the school year when the pupil reaches the age of 16. There are state, church and private secondary schools in Slovakia. They differ in the way of funding, but all of them have the same bodies responsible for their quality. These are school inspectors (*štátna školská inšpekcia*) and the State Vocational Education Institute (*štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania – IOV*). IOV is a professional, methodological, pedagogical, advisory, coordinative and educational institution of the Ministry of Education. It acts as the professional and pedagogical guarantor for the issues of vocational education and training for the whole network of secondary vocational and specialised schools.

There are different types of vocational study programmes available as full-time studies, part-time or evening studies and post-secondary studies. There are two types of secondary schools offering full-time vocational education and training: *stredné odborné učilišťa* (secondary vocational schools) and *stredné odborné školy* (secondary specialised schools). Both of them provide different degrees of secondary education. Some of the secondary schools enable *štúdium popri zamestnaní* (part-time, evening study), which is meant especially for those already involved in working process.

A post-secondary study (*Pomaturitné a nadstavbové štúdium*) means a study at a secondary education institution after the student has already obtained *maturita* certificate within his previous study. The post-secondary study may have qualification or specialisation purpose. The qualification purpose means that the graduate will reach a certificate that will be “higher” than *maturita* (e.g. *absolutorium*). The specialisation

purpose is getting vocational qualification that allows to perform a specific occupation, but represents the same qualification degree: *úplné stredné vzdelanie*. The specific occupation can not be performed without completion of such a study after the first *maturita*.

Vocational in-company training as such is not provided in Slovakia. Initial vocational training is an integral part of secondary school system in Slovakia and even continuous vocational training is often carried out by vocational teachers and vocational schools. All in all, vocational education and training in Slovakia is still strongly school focused, and although there are good examples of cooperation between schools and enterprises, in-company training as such is still rather the exception than the standard.

The Slovak National Observatory (SNO) was established by the contract between the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training (SIOV). SIOV has been appointed by the Ministry of Education of SR and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family as the host institute of SNO. The office of SNO is operating since 15 July 1998. Since then SNO has assisted in elaboration of several studies, and elaborated and submitted to ETF the set of statistical data - key indicators, fact sheet and other tailor made information. This contact might be useful for further investigations on this matter. See <http://www.siov.sk/siov/dokhtm/7sno/snoen/sno.html> for more information.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

2.1) How is the training of trainers organised, how is it embedded in the general education system and in the further education system?

Vocational education and training in Slovakia is, similar to VET in the Czech Republic, dominantly school-based. This is even more so in initial vocational education and training. Nevertheless companies are sometimes involved in the practical training of VET school students. There are generally two options: In-company training can be carried out by trainers at educational establishments of companies. And second company instructors sometimes provide practical training for students based on an agreement between school and company. Both types of trainings would typically take place at the workplace of the regarding company.

The first option, *training at educational establishments of companies*, comprises centres of practical training, which originally aim at practical training of students of secondary vocational schools and centres of vocational practice which originally aim at practical training of students of secondary specialised schools. Their employees are mostly fully qualified trainers. The centres are recognised by education sector legislation and are usually established by educational authorities or by companies. Trainers at educational establishments of companies therefore usually are employees of the establishing enterprise.

The second option of *training by company instructors* is less institutionalised but based on common interest and professional contacts between schools and enterprises. Based on an agreement between a school and a company and often initiated by students, practical training can be provided directly by a company under the supervision of the school, however on company premises and performed by company staff (experienced professionals – called “instructors”) who may or may not have pedagogical qualifications. They are just intuitively assessed as appropriate for working with youth. While experience

and pedagogical competence is expected but not required, instructors need a respective professional qualification.

2.2) Which ways do exist to become a trainer and to further develop as a trainer?

There are no specific regulations concerning trainers in continuing vocational education and training.

3. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

3.1) How is the training of trainers financed, who invests why into the training of trainers?

Not much data available. The work of professional trainers is usually based on an agreement with a respective company or institution, as they usually provide training at a workplace. Trainers in continuing vocational education and training at companies or institutions usually have an employer based status and regulation, as they carry out trainings within companies or the training facilities of companies.

4. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

4.1) How many persons are working as a trainer (formally/informally; full-time/part-time; female/male; nationals/foreigners)?

Numbers are available for school based training only. Out of the usual school types only in SOPs (stredisko odbornje praxe, centre of vocational practice, that provides practical training) trainings usually take place outside school. Therefore only SOPs come at least close to the concept of in-company training. In the school year 2005/2006 there were 29 such centres of vocational practice throughout Slovakia with all in all 226 employed trainers and instructors.

4.2) What are the prerequisites to become a trainer?

Not much data available. Company instructors do not need to meet any formal requirement that shows experience and pedagogical competence. They are just intuitively assessed as appropriate for working with youth. But in contrast they do need a respective professional qualification.

The work of professional trainers who provide training at a workplace is usually based on an agreement with a respective company or institution. The qualification will be regulated by the sectoral regulation of professional qualification. Pedagogical qualification might be required by respective sectoral regulation.

Trainers in continuing vocational education and training at companies or institutions usually have an employer based status and regulation.

4.3) How are trainers recruited by enterprises?

No data available as vocational in-company training as such is generally not provided in Slovakia.