



Reform of the Slovakian vocational education and training system

SWITZERLAND SUPPORTS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE LABOUR MARKET IN SLOVAKIA



The training at the VET school for food processing and hotel services in Bratislava prepares apprentices well for the Slovakian job market.

The goal of this project is the reform of Slovakia's vocational education and training system to better gear vocational education and training (VET) programmes toward the country's labour market. According to statistics, youth unemployment in Slovakia is around 30%. Many sectors of the economy in Slovakia nevertheless complain that it is difficult to find well-qualified staff and wish to see more practice-oriented vocational education and training. This project therefore actively promotes cooperation between upper-secondary vocational schools, industry associations and employer organisations. Switzerland functions as a model and with its extensive experience of the dual vocational education system, is playing an important part in the ongoing reform.

The most popular form of vocational training in Switzerland is a combination of practical training in a company and study at a vocational school. This dual vocational education and training system is one of Switzerland's strengths. Education and training is geared toward the actual demand for vocational qualifications and to the jobs available. Thanks to this direct connection to the labour market, Switzerland enjoys a high proportion of well-qualified labour compared with other European countries.

PRACTICE-ORIENTED EDUCATION AND TRAINING IMPROVES STUDENTS' LABOUR MARKET PROSPECTS

The Slovak Republic does not yet have a dual vocational education and training system. Vocational schools provide both theoretical and practical education and training.

They are also sometimes not aware of precisely what the Slovakian businesses expect from the school-leavers or of trends in the Slovakian labour market. This allows gaps to form between the skills acquired in the Slovakian VET programmes and the needs of companies, which in turn contributes to high unemployment, in particular among young people who have not yet been able to enter the labour market.

The project is being carried out in close collaboration with the Slovakian State Vocational Education Institute (SIOV) and the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET).

THE PROJECT INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

Exchange of expertise and analysis of the situation: A Slovakian delegation from the project visited several Swiss educational establishments to get a first-hand impression of the Swiss dual-track system. A Swiss delegation from the SFIVET then made a return visit to Slovakia. Representatives from the SIOV conducted an inquiry and compared the VET situation in the Slovak Republic in various fields with labour market demand. A method developed by the SFIVET was used to do this.

Choice of professional organisations: A list of suitable Slovakian professional organisations in a good position to collaborate on the project was drawn up based on discussions. The professional organisations are from the chemicals sector, structural engineering, electrical engineering, the food industry and the hotel and restaurant industry. Their task is to contribute to the needs of the private sector and provide support to help labour market requirements become part of school curricula.

Thanks to their practice-oriented training, graduates from the technical school for electricians find a job after completing their apprenticeships.



Sharing Swiss experiences: Experts from six vocational schools in the fields of technology, chemicals, baking and confectionery, glass, construction and hairdressing were trained by the SFIVET.

Development of new course programmes: Based on the analyses and in consultation with the professional organisations, new course programmes («curricula») were developed and then piloted and evaluated in various VET establishments. Instructors and teachers from VET schools have received training on the new content and methods taught in the programmes. Further training will be provided. To improve the link between education and practice, additional and newer equipment and machines are being made available for students to train on.

Making the Slovakian VET system more attractive: The advantages and strengths of vocational education and training are mentioned in schools, in particular in sectors where supply exceeds demand. Efforts are being made in cooperation with the government to improve the reputation of vocational education and training: information about the reforms is provided at open days, press conferences and workshops, and nationwide awareness campaigns aim to improve the attractiveness of vocational education and training. However, the best publicity for vocational courses is and will always be the success of school leavers on the labour market.

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

OBJECTIVE

Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

THEME

Vocational education and training

COUNTRY

Slovakia

PARTNER

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Youth unemployment lies at around 30%. Many industries in Slovakia bemoan the lack of practical relevance of Slovakia's VET system and difficulties in finding well-qualified staff.

AIM

The goal of the project is to better gear vocational education and training to labour market requirements and reduce youth unemployment. An additional aim is to make vocational education and training more attractive through publicity and awareness-raising activities.

ACTIVITIES

On the basis of analyses of the current situation in Slovakia compared with that of Switzerland, new VET course programmes are being developed and tested until 2016 together with Slovakian professional organisations in five industries. VET school teachers are also receiving training. For the duration of the project, a nationwide campaign is being run to promote the dual VET system with various information and communication activities.

TARGET GROUPS

Apprentices, young employees, professional associations and VET institutions across the country

COSTS

Total project costs:

CHF 4.57 million

Swiss contribution:

CHF 3.89 million

RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Slovakian State Vocational Education Institute SIOV

DURATION

2011 - 2016