



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 school for food processing and hotel services in Bratislava prepares apprentices well for the Slovakian job market. © SDC

Through this project, Switzerland supported the reform of Slovakia's vocational education and training system. Encouraging cooperation between vocational schools, trade associations and employer organisations resulted in programmes better geared to the requirements of the Slovakian labour market in the fields of technology, chemicals, baking and confectionery, glass, construction and hairdressing. Switzerland's dual vocational system inspired the reforms and the country's extensive experience was a vital source of input. In addition, the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET provided the expertise needed to implement the project.

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

PRACTICE-ORIENTED EDUCATION AND TRAINING IMPROVES LABOUR MARKET PROSPECTS

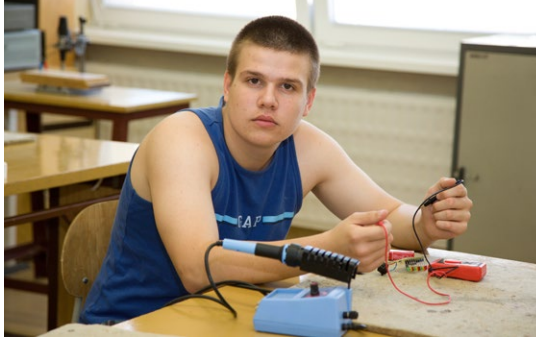
According to statistics, youth unemployment in Slovakia stood at more than 30% at the end of 2012 when the project began. Many sectors of the economy nevertheless complained that it was difficult to find well-qualified staff and wished to see more practice-oriented vocational education and training. Vocational schools provided apprentices with theoretical and practical training often without a clear idea of what Slovakian companies expected from the school leavers or how the job market was developing. This allowed gaps to form between the skills acquired in the Slovakian VET programmes and the needs of companies, which in turn contributed to high unemployment, in particular among young people who had not yet been able to enter the labour market.

To support Slovakia's switch to a dual vocational education and training system, in close collaboration with the Slovakian State Vocational Education Institute (SIOV) and the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET), new course programmes were developed, vocational school teachers and apprenticeship instructors were trained, study visits were organised and a nationwide campaign raised awareness of the benefits of the dual VET system.

ENCOURAGING RESULTS

The project, which ended in March 2017, achieved many positive results. In collaboration with vocational schools, professional associations and employer organisations, programme curricula in technology, chemicals, baking and confectionery, glassmaking, construction and hairdressing were adjusted to better gear them to the requirements of the Slovakian labour market. In 2016/2017, 440 apprentices are attending courses which follow these new curricula. The various publicity measures to improve the appeal of the dual system were also effective. Peter Krajnak, Slovakian State Secretary at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, has seen interest

Their practice-oriented training means graduates from the technical school for electricians find a job after their apprenticeships.
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in the dual vocational education and training system grow among parents, pupils and companies.

MILESTONE: SUCCESSFUL REFORM

The main goal of the project – reform of the Slovakian vocational education and training system – has to a large extent been achieved. The adoption of the 2015 Act on Vocational Education and Training created a national legal basis for Slovakia's dual system. Parts of the act are based on the Swiss model. In addition to regulating the contracts of apprentices, the act strengthened the role played by employers. Employers are now responsible for organising practical training and for ensuring the appropriate content and quality of the training. They also have the right to be included in the development of curricula.

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 stood at over 30% at the start of the project in 2012. Many industries in Slovakia complained of a lack of practical relevance in Slovakia's VET system and difficulties in finding well-qualified staff.

AIM

- better gear vocational education and training to labour market requirements
- reduce youth unemployment
- make vocational education and training more attractive through publicity and awareness-raising activities

ACTIVITIES

On the basis of a comparison of the situation in Slovakia with the Swiss system, new course programmes were developed and tested together with Slovakian professional organisations in six industries. Vocational school teachers and apprenticeship instructors also received further training. School open days, press conferences and workshops nationwide introduced dual vocational education and training to the public and raised awareness of the system's benefits.

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

2011–2017