



**Erasmus+, KA3: National Authorities for Apprenticeships**

**Introduction of Elements Dual VET  
in the Slovak Republic**

**Review of Slovak Legislation  
and VET Pilot Schemes**

**WP4 – Development and Implementation of  
Dual Technical Apprenticeships in Slovak Republic**



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## **Review of Slovak Legislation and VET Pilot Schemes**

### **I. Analysis and review of new Slovak TVET law and implications for technical apprenticeships**

#### **1. Important facts about the economic situation in Europe before 2015**

A large number of EU countries were faced with serious economic problems in 2012. Youth unemployment reached in some countries up to 50%, a large number of young people dropped out of school without formal qualifications. Young people should be given new prospects through high-quality and market-required training programs.

Practical teaching in the workplace of the employer and dual education or a combination thereof is the cornerstone of strategic documents such as the strategy of education and training ET 2020, the Europe 2020 strategy (Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) and Copenhagen process in vocational education and training. These initiatives and the strategies of EU support and highlight the dual education and vocational education as an essential and elemental component of modernization of vocational education and training.

Current status of vocational education and training, high youth unemployment and lack of interest in studying technical fields of education have been the driving force behind the activities of the German government organizing a ministerial conference, which resulted in the signing of a memorandum of cooperation in vocational education and training in Europe.

##### **1.1. Signature of a Memorandum**

On 10 and 11 December 2012 in Berlin, a Ministerial Conference was held which resulted in the signing of a memorandum. Ministers of the participating countries stressed out the importance of increased cooperation and support of activities that are meant to introduce dual education, apprenticeships and practical trainings in the workplace of employers in vocational education and training of the partner countries.

Ministers of the partner countries have agreed that over the next five years they support the following areas of cooperation:

- ✓ increase the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training;
- ✓ involvement of social partners and the private sector as responsible actors in the field of vocational education and training;
- ✓ mutual support modernization of vocational education and training;
- ✓ increase mobility in vocational education and training as a contribution to the development of the European labor market and education sector
- ✓ closer links to existing instruments of European cooperation in vocational education and training and the use of structures and programs.

At the same time, it was agreed that from 2013 they would implement the following activities:

- ✓ the creation of at least 30 flagship projects in order to create regional structures between businesses and chambers of commerce in partner countries over the next two years;
- ✓ grant of up to 10 million euros from the German side to the financing of German partners in these projects with the objective to establish partnerships between businesses, chambers of commerce and educational institutions;
- ✓ Having regard to the foregoing, the appropriate co-financing by partner countries to support its partners in the flagship projects if they are to set aside funds in partner countries;
- ✓ Development of the EURES network as a system of European placements for apprentices;
- ✓ in the school year 2013/2014 to define at least 10 fields of education for the implementation of the above activities;
- ✓ further cooperation in using the new programming period and resources from the ESF;
- ✓ The Expert group on vocational education and training in all countries, including the co-ordinator in each case;
- ✓ to support projects within ERASMUS +;
- ✓ setting up a common long-term cooperation platform in order to ensure further development of cooperation and review progress under this MOU.

The signatories of the Memorandum are Germany, Slovakia, Latvia, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

## **1.2. The course of subsequent activities in VET in Slovakia**

On April 25, 2013 an International Conference on dual education was held, which has been raised to call for the transformation of the vocational education and training in Slovakia and the introduction of a dual system of education in vocational education and training. One of the starting points for the development of the conference was the signing of a memorandum in Berlin. Germany was represented at the conference by Ms Kornelia Haugg, Director General of Vocational Training of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science of Germany. At the conference, the German employers presented the dual training system as well as their cooperation with the Slovak secondary vocational schools.

In November 2013, a meeting of representatives from Ministry of Education of SR, BMBF, BIBB, AHK, DIHK, T-Systems, T-Mobile Deutschland was held in Bonn, Germany. The object of the visit were consultations and exchange of ideological positions with German partners on vocational education and training as well as a presentation of dual training in IT technology in Germany and Slovakia through the company T-Systems and Secondary Vocational School of Electrical, Košice. The subject of presentations by Germany were examples of good practice of the German Chamber of Commerce, secondary vocational schools, T-Mobile and BIBB. The program included practical training excursion of the center T-Mobile as well as interviews with apprentices. The Slovak delegation was led by former state secretary of Ministry of Education Mr. Štefan Chudoba.

## **1.3. European Alliance for apprenticeships**

In response to the signing of the memorandum was followed in July 2013 signed by the European Alliance for apprenticeships, which supports EU Member States as well as businesses to create high-quality and attractive places for apprenticeships and for work-based learning. The activity emerged from the collaboration of EU countries that have dual systems of education implemented and major executives from the European Commission. The Alliance was signed in the form of a joint declaration between the Directorate-General of EC for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and Education, Culture, Sports and Youth.

## **1.4. Memorandum of understanding**

Between the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKÖ) and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovakia was on February 12, 2014 in Vienna signed a memorandum of understanding. Memorandum strengthen cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the WKÖ in implementing elements of the dual education system in vocational education and training in Slovakia using rich experience of WKÖ with dual education and transfer of its parts abroad. Based on the Memorandum was in Zlate Moravce launched a pilot project called "Young Star" for the purpose of introducing elements of the Austrian dual system of education in vocational education and training in Slovakia.

### **1.5. Joint Declaration on Cooperation in VET**

Building on previous cooperation and by creating legislative conditions for the entry of companies into the dual system of education has shifted further the relations in the field of education neighboring countries. The culmination of this cooperation was the signing of the Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovakia and the Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany on 25 September 2015. Both sides declared their interest in cooperating in the next transition vocational education and training, as well as in the creation and implementation of projects or mobility of students and teaching staff and career counseling.

## **2. Important features of Slovak VET**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) has a strong tradition in Slovakia and it is one of the essential components of education here. Orientation for industry, subcontracting manufacture and former directly linking schools with businesses create good preconditions so that VET can be further developed. The VET is the only segment of upbringing and education which is fulfilling the needs of the labour market and that ensure its exclusive position.

There are 32 groups of fields of study recognised by legislation for secondary schools and most of study programs emphasis not only on theoretical knowledge, but on practical skills, experiences and habits, too. For that reason, it must be part of educational programs of secondary vocational schools practical training aimed at gaining relevant practical skills, experiences and habits.

This practical training is most effective when a substantial part is performed directly in the workplace of employers. The basic condition for the effectiveness of VET segment is its ability to respond to changing labour market needs. The fulfilment of this condition requires regular analysis of data on labour market developments and close cooperation with employers.

## **3. Advantages of the Slovak VET system**

- A majority of young people are educated in vocational programmes and it has good status

In 2012/2013, nearly 72% of secondary school students graduated from VET. It is nearly as high as in the Czech Republic, and higher than in other countries with similar economic structures (Poland, Hungary). According to a recent survey, parents continue to see VET edu-

cation as an educational path that can support employability of their children, in particular with respect to the upper secondary streams finishing with the maturita.

VET institutions build on a long tradition that dates back to the Czechoslovak system before 1970s that provided for a strong link between VET schools and state-owned enterprises. With the economic transition the system evolved in the 1990s into a school-based system. The 2008 reform introduced governance mechanisms for linking secondary education more closely to the labour market. The VET tradition and past experiences of reforming are assets in designing changes that can improve responsiveness to the labour market.

- Both key governmental policy makers and non-governmental stakeholders share an understanding of the need for reform

The 2013 State of Education Report reflects a developing consensus:

- the quality of VET should be increased so that graduates are able to enter the labour market successfully after finishing their studies.
- the role of employers should be strengthened by enhancing both their responsibilities as well as rights in the VET system.
- measures should be taken to increase the interest of pupils in VET.

- New Act on VET provides the direction for reform

The New Act aims to establish a clearer division of rights and responsibilities for stakeholders, employers and employer associations particularly through a clear legal contractual relationship between schools, pupils/apprentices and firms.

- Large employers in particular are keen supporters of more extensive workbased learning in VET.

Many large employers, employers' associations and foreign chambers of commerce are actively engaged in helping to build a better VET system. Fragmented structures and voluntary memberships of employers' associations and unions put limitations of broader representativeness of interests, since the implementation of 2009 VET law a framework has been in place which allows a regular exchange and coordination of the system. The new proposed legislation builds upon this basis and seeks to simplify the coordination framework while making employer rights and responsibilities more explicit, in particular in the provision of elements of dual VET system.

- The Slovak VET system is flexible

The VET system in Slovakia is relatively comprehensible with a small set of vocational pathways (with and without maturita) while the number of programmes is modest in international comparison. In 2013/2014, 436 VET programmes existed in total.

Slovak upper secondary education is fairly flexible and able to accommodate different local models for the division of learning between theory and practice. Such flexibility is achieved through the autonomy of schools to develop school-level curricula and in the capacity of the VET streams of upper secondary education to adjust the mix of theory and practice.

- Slovakia has traditionally performed relatively well in keeping pupils in the education system

In 2013, early leaving from education and training stood at 6.4%, about half of the EU28 average (12%).

- Strong economy with relatively well recovering from the global economic crisis

For Slovakia, the income gap relative to the upper half of OECD countries converged from over 60% in the early 2000s to close to 40% by 2013. Between 2001 and 2011, growth in GDP per capita was the highest in the OECD and the country recovered relatively well from the global economic crisis.

#### **4. The Act n. 61/2015 on Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia**

The Act on VET was accepted by the Slovak National Council on 12 March 2015 and it is entered into effect on 1 April 2015. The aim of the new act is to enable a smooth transition of secondary vocational schools from education to the labour market and reduce the risk of unemployment for young graduates. There are incorporated elements enabling the preparation of students in the dual education.

When we have to speak about the legislative process, we have to say that a working group for development of the draft Law on VET was created by representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovakia and the Ministry of Economy of Slovakia, representatives of employers and employers' associations, representatives of school founders (selfgovernment regions Žilina and Bratislava), representatives of employees and a solving group of the national project RSOV(Development of VET).

The draft of the Act had been continuously consulted with other experts in the various parts of the content.

##### **4.1. Regulated issues**

The Act n. 61/2015 on Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia regulates the following issues:

- vocational education and training offered to pupils attending secondary vocational school,
- the types of secondary vocational schools,

- practical training,
- dual education system,
- verification of employer's capability for the provision of practical training in the dual education system,
- contractual relations between the employer and secondary vocational school and between the employer and pupil in the course of practical training,
- the material and financial support of the pupils,
- coordination of vocational education and training for the labour market.

#### **4.2. Organisation of VET according to the new Act**

The Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia can be organised, according to the new law on VET, in three different ways.

The first way is a fully school-organised VET system, where the school provides the practical training for its pupils in its own facilities, usually workbenches under the supervision of VET school masters or VET teachers.

The second possibility is the currently used system of school-based VET with provisions of work-based learning through its provisions in VET programs. In this case, the secondary VET school cooperates with certain employers and sends its pupils for the practical training into the real working environment at workplaces. The secondary VET school and employer sign a contract for the realisation of the practical training by the employer. The training is performed under the supervision of secondary VET school trainers and in-company trainers, who are employed by the employer and their duty is to train the pupils of the VET school according to the VET program and school curricula.

It shall be noted that the practical training is usually performed as a "practice work" where the pupil trains and improves his or her skills to create a certain product or deliver designated services. This phase of practical training can be done both in school-based as well as in work-based VET environment. From the certain point, depending on concrete VET program the pupil creates a productive work. For this, he or she is entitled to receive a remuneration from 50% to 100% of the common wage of a normal employee.

#### **4.3. System of Dual Education**

The new Act on VET No. 61/2015 Coll. makes a huge breakdown in the transformation process of the Slovak VET system. It introduces a system of dual education system based on the experiences of the Austrian, German and Swiss partners. The system of dual education represents a boost for the attractiveness of VET due to its former tradition in former Czechoslovakia, especially in the fields of machinery, automotive, construction, tailoring and chemistry

industry. The strong connection and cooperation between secondary VET schools and employers is needed. The practical training as a work-based learning is fully organised and covered by the employer, who has to sign a treaty on dual education. In this treaty, the responsibilities and duties of both subjects in the system of dual education are defined. The work-based learning is provided by the employer at his workplace, which must be certified by a corresponding chamber of employers.

According to article 10 of Act on VET, the pupil in the system of dual education prepares himself or herself for his or her future occupation, occupations or other professional activities after the demands and requirements of the employer with whom the pupil has signed an apprenticeship contract.

The employer in the system of dual education has a very strong role to influence the VET provisions in VET programs. His own demands can be reflected in school curricula. In dual education, the employer has a responsibility to participate at the creation of school curricula.

- **Certification of Employers**

As it was mentioned above, the employer, who has been certified to provide the practical training in system of dual education, must fulfil certain requirements. These include:

The employer must fill in the application for the certification procedure in order to enter the system of dual education. The application must be sent to the representative chamber until 30<sup>th</sup> of September of the year that proceeds the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of the year in which the employer can provide the practical training in the system of dual education.

The application for the certification of employer to provide the practical training in system of dual education contains:

- ✓ identification data of the employer,
- ✓ main activities of the employer,
- ✓ field of study or fields of study in which the employer will provide the practical training,
- ✓ number of pupils in system of dual education,
- ✓ secondary VET school which the pupils will attend and with which the employer has signed treaty on dual education,
- ✓ the estimated number of VET teachers and secondary VET trainers under who the pupils will carry out their practical training and who are the employees of employer,
- ✓ the estimated number of VET teachers and secondary VET trainers under who the pupils will carry out their practical training and who are the employees of secondary VET school in case the employer does not have them,
- ✓ the estimated number of in-company trainers,

- ✓ school year from which the employer starts to provide the practical training,
- ✓ signature of the employer.

Annex to the application is a certificate of authorization of the employer to perform the activities which corresponds with the content of education in designated field of study and certificate of availability of employer's facilities for the corresponding part of the school curricula of a designated field of study. The requirements for material and technical equipment of the employer must match at the same level the requirements of eligibility of secondary VET school to provide the education in the designated field of study.

- **Treaty on Dual Education**

For the employer to enter the system of dual education, he must sign the treaty on dual education.

The treaty includes:

- ✓ identification data of the employer,
- ✓ identification of secondary VET schools,
- ✓ the obligation of the employer to provide pupils practical training at his own expense and responsibility,
- ✓ a commitment from secondary VET schools to organize vocational education and training in the system of dual education,
- ✓ the field of study in which the system of dual education will be performed,
- ✓ number of pupils in system of dual education,
- ✓ the form of practical training,
- ✓ the place of practical training,
- ✓ the number of VET teachers, secondary VET school trainers who are employees of employer under whose authority pupils will carry out the practical training,
- ✓ the number of VET teachers, secondary VET school trainers who are employees of secondary VET school (if employer does not have them) under whose authority pupils will carry out the practical training,
- ✓ the number of in-company trainers in case the pupil carries out his or her practical training under guidance of in-company trainer,
- ✓ timetable of practical training in accordance with the established organization of education and training in secondary VET schools,
- ✓ the manner in which the in-company trainer assesses and evaluates the pupil,
- ✓ financial provision of practical training and teaching staff,
- ✓ material provision for pupils,
- ✓ financial provision for pupils,
- ✓ form of participation of the employer at the final examination,
- ✓ a way of ensuring mutual rights and obligations of contractual parties,
- ✓ time period for which the contract has been concluded,

- ✓ form of withdrawing from the contract,
- ✓ date and signature of contractual parties.

The employer as well as secondary VET school can decide to sign more contracts with other employers or secondary VET schools respectively.

- **Apprenticeship treaty**

The employer and the legal representative of the underage pupil or adult pupil discuss the particulars of an apprenticeship treaty and conditions of practical training in system of dual education. This treaty can be signed, at latest, on 31<sup>th</sup> of August before the start of a first school year of pupil.

The apprenticeship treaty contains:

- ✓ identification data of the employer,
- ✓ name, surname and date of birth of the legal representative of pupil in the case of a underage pupil,
- ✓ name, surname and date of birth of the pupil,
- ✓ identification data of secondary vocational school which pupil attends,
- ✓ the obligation of the employer to prepare pupils for their occupation, occupations or professional activities in system of dual education,
- ✓ a commitment of the pupil to participate in the practical training directly by the employer in accordance with his specific needs and requirements,
- ✓ field of study,
- ✓ the form of practical training,
- ✓ the place of practical training,
- ✓ organization of study, including a timetable of practical training in accordance with provisions of organization of education and training in secondary VET schools,
- ✓ material provision for pupils,
- ✓ financial provision for pupils,
- ✓ form of ensuring mutual rights and obligations of the contractual parties,
- ✓ form of withdrawing from the contract,
- ✓ date and signature of contractual parties.

- **Material provision for pupils**

When pupil carries out his or her practical training on the workplace of the employer, the employer must provide him or her with the personal protective equipment and must conduct the assessment of health, sensory and psychological capabilities of pupil if it is required by the nature of the practical training.

An employer who provides practical training for pupil in system of the dual education has to finance the nutrition of pupil during the practical training.

In system of dual education the employer has the possibility, not the obligation to finance the accommodation of pupil in school dormitory and travel expenses from place of residence of pupils to the secondary VET school, workplace of employer or dormitory and back.

- **Financial provision for pupils**

The pupil who creates on the workplace of employer a productive work receives a reward for his or her productive work, which can be from 50% to 100% of the wage of real employees of employer. The amount of the reward of productive work depends on the quality of the work performed and the behaviour of pupil.

In fields of study, which have been selected by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic as insufficient on the labour market (the demand of the labour market is greater than the actual number of pupils in these fields of study), the state provides to pupils the motivation scholarship in order to motivate the young people to study technical fields.

It is supplied by monthly basis and is distributed among pupils in following way:

- ✓ 65% of subsistence minimum by average of grades of pupil up to 1.8
- ✓ 45% of subsistence minimum by average of grades of pupil from 1.8 to 2.4
- ✓ 25% of subsistence minimum by average of grades of pupil from 2.4 including 3.0.

The employer can also provide pupils with the business scholarship. It is paid on monthly basis up to the quadruple of subsistence minimum.

- **Support for Employers to enter the System of Dual Education**

Employers are motivated to take part in VET by fiscal incentives in form of tax exemptions, which are per pupil based and fixed according to the extent of provided work based training. Employers' associations will certify employers in the dual system and they will be also subjected to external control from the State School Inspection as they will be responsible for the practical training of students.

Most of the expenses account for tax incentives (reduced tax base by € 3,200 per pupil for 200 – 400 hours of work based learning per year, or € 1,600 for less than 200 – 400 hours).

- **Centre of Vocational Education and Training**

The secondary VET school can become a centre of VET. The founder of the school must give his consent and it is decided by the representative chamber of employers for the designated area of industry or services. The secondary VET school can use this title when:

- ✓ the secondary VET school cooperates with the employers in area of VET,
- ✓ has recommended training facilities designed by the normative of material and technical provision,
- ✓ is an educational institution for further education according to the Act on Lifelong Learning No. 568/2009 Coll. preparing for the occupation, occupations and other professional activities connected to the linked fields of study,
- ✓ usually those schools are marked for their higher standards in equipment and pedagogical and professional staff and cooperation with the employers.

## **5. SWOT Analysis of Act n. 61/2015 on VET**

### **5.1. Analysis of the Act 61/2015 by Slovakia**

#### **Strengths of the new Act on VET:**

- ✓ The Ministry of Finance abandoned its long-term resistance to tax policies as instruments for intervention in social and educational policies:
  - incentives for enterprises providing practical training in their certified training facilities are tax deductible, thus the initial costs are reduced by 22%, which corresponds to corporate tax;
  - additional tax deductible incentives are offered on a per capita principle depending on hours of offered practical training: EUR 3,200 per trainee for 400 hours of practical training per year or EUR 1,600 per trainee for 200 hours of practical training per year;
  - remuneration for productive work that amounts to 50% to 100% of a minimum wage is also exempted from levies.
- ✓ New 'apprentices' can receive a company stipend offering practical training based on a training contract, remuneration for their 'productive work' performed within practical training, and a motivation stipend from the State in cases of entering training identified as missing in the labour market.

This corresponds to the following income:

- company stipend can reach a maximum of four times the subsistence costs

(currently EUR 361.68 monthly);

- remuneration for productive work equals 50%-100% of minimum wage (currently EUR 1.09 to 2.18 per hour);
- motivation stipend offered monthly in three levels equal to 65%, 45% and 25% of subsistence costs depending on student's learning performance with average mark limits 1.8, 2.4 and 3.0 (with 1 for the best and 5 for the worst learning performance); currently it corresponds to EUR 58.77 monthly for best performing students.

#### Recommendations for the future:

- ✓ offering State-financed partnership grants for schools and companies to cover transformation costs and motivating schools to enter a cooperation model that is less stable than the current one based on institutional contracts between schools and companies;
- ✓ creating quality assurance procedures for companies and graduates entering into the dual system;
- ✓ creating an infrastructure supporting supply and demand of trainees and various quality programmes, including training of experts on employers' side enabling the world of work to take full responsibility for providing high-quality training programmes;
- ✓ attracting trainees into the dual system. Mistrust of young people and their parents towards apprenticeship caused by labour market turbulences particularly in the 1990s must be overcome by offering generous incomes to apprentices and clear career progress opportunities. Slovakia still misses a flexible qualifications system that would offer apprentices in blue-collar professions advancement to an institutionalised 'master craftsman' qualification, non-university tertiary qualifications and recognition of results of non-formal and informal learning.

## **5.2. Analysis of the dual vocational education and training system of Germany in comparison with Slovakia**

### Strengths of the German vocational education and training system

- ✓ Most vocational training is carried out within companies according to specific vocational training regulations. The curricula offered by vocational training colleges are tailored to the training regulations for different vocations.
- ✓ The vocational training regulations and exams for different vocations are the same in each German federal state.
- ✓ The subjects tested in the exam are standardized and mandatory for each German

federal state. Exams are conducted by honorary examiners who work in the industry themselves.

- ✓ The law requires that trainers working in enterprises must show professional and personal aptitude. They must pass an aptitude examination. Courses are available to prepare for this examination.
- ✓ The chambers of commerce and industry advise the companies offering training, monitor the training provided by these companies, assess the suitability of companies and trainers, register apprenticeship contracts and conduct the examinations. This ensures that standards remain high.
- ✓ Trainees receive apprenticeship pay from the company for the duration of their training. This means that the company is investing in its future employees which implies a high degree of self-interest and involvement on the part of the company. The level of apprenticeship pay varies depending on the sector.
- ✓ The trainees are already integrated in daily work processes because of their practical work in the company. It allows them to directly see their own progress and the impact of their training. This is highly motivating for trainees and results in trainings identifying strongly with the trade they are learning.
- ✓ In addition to teaching trainees trade-specific theoretical and practical subjects for 1-2 days per week, vocational training colleges also teach general education subjects, e.g. German, economics, civics and vocational English.
- ✓ In principle, after completing the training, all vocational trades offer the option of doing a further qualification (e.g. master certification). The rules governing this further vocational training are laid down in the Vocational Training Act.
- ✓ The flexibility of the vocational training system also offers the opportunity to continue education at a university level. In principle, the path to university education is open to everyone who completes their vocational training.
- ✓ There are many interesting career perspectives open to apprentices after completing vocational training. There are also the options to set up their own company.
- ✓ Companies benefit from the availability of extremely well qualified specialists with extensive professional skills and close ties to the company. It strengthens companies' competitive position.

- ✓ German vocational training integrates young people directly in the labor market. It keeps youth unemployment low. Because the vocational subjects taught and the final vocational qualifications are recognized by all companies, qualified specialists can easily transfer to other companies. This is an effective means of bringing together supply and demand on the labor market and balancing one against the other.
- ✓ The system does not just have the advantage that young people are integrated in the labor market, it also helps to integrate young people from different social classes into society.
- ✓ Trainees are included in the social security system very early on. By starting to pay social security contributions at an early stage in their career, young people are looking ahead and planning for the future.
- ✓ As small and medium-sized enterprises may be unable to offer the full training content required, training courses are also available from industry-wide training centers. These industry-wide training courses, which run from the first to the final year of training, are designed to complement and support in-house training. Such industry-wide training guarantees similarly high standards across all vocations and trades, irrespective of the capacity of the individual company to provide full training. The courses provide specific practical vocational skills and knowledge and are an integral part of the dual vocational training system. The industry-wide training centers are funded and operated by the chambers of industry and commerce and other economic organizations. Government subsidies are available for the construction and equipment of the necessary workshops and to run the training programs.

#### Factors that influence the successful introduction of a dual vocational and educational training system in Slovakia

- ✓ Young people and their parents often hold vocational training in lower esteem than a university education. It is important to demonstrate the wide range of interesting and cutting-edge trades and vocations to teachers, parents and pupils at comprehensive secondary schools along with the many opportunities offered by such trades and vocations.
- ✓ Companies need to receive more and better information e.g. from their commercial or industrial federations and chambers, and need to realize how important it is to invest in vocational training and personnel development and also, for example, that they should remunerate their apprentices. The tangible benefits of vocational training for companies need to be spelled out.

- ✓ To ensure a high standard of vocational and educational training, the instructors in trade schools/vocational training colleges and the trainers in companies must themselves be given appropriate training and the opportunity for professional development.
- ✓ Following the introduction of legislation mandating in-company vocational training, it is important that trade schools/vocational training colleges and companies are engaged in a continuous process of dialog and consultation.
- ✓ Once the training regulations have been drawn up and in-company training is available for specific trades, existing training programs which offer the same final qualifications but which are only based in schools should be discontinued.
- ✓ If the Slovakian chambers of industry and commerce are not able to carry out the duties required by the Vocational Training Act (which include advising companies offering training, monitoring in-company training, assessing the suitability of companies and trainers, registering apprenticeship contracts, carrying out the final examinations), it will be important to start developing and establishing alternative structures early on.
- ✓ It is important to involve representatives from the respective economic organizations and from the unions (social partners) when drawing up the training regulations for different trades. Representatives from the Slovakian Ministry of Economic Affairs should also be involved to ensure that economic and technological concerns are also taken into account.

### **5.3. Feasibility study of BIBB on the „Pilot project: Introduction of dual training structures on the example of a cooperative training in small urban areas in cooperation with international / German companies, central / regional administrations and colleges in Slovakia”**

#### Starting point

- Introduction of the dual vocational education into the current school based VET by reforming the national VET act
- Among other points the aim of the reform is to introduce a 4-year vocational education with practical contents up to 60% and with two leaving-certificates ('Abitur' and recognized vocational qualification)
- **At the time of the feasibility study the draft of the new VET act has been in the discussion phase!!!**

#### Aim of the feasibility study

- Development of recommendations for action to conduct the pilot project in Nove Mesto vad Vahom

### Selected results of the feasibility study

- School curricula: is mainly autonomously developed by the schools; involvement of companies would be appreciated
- Practical qualification at vocational schools: schools complain that companies lack of interest to offer incompany trainings as part of the vocational education; technical equipment and teaching methods in schools are not „up-to-date“
- Assessment of the share of the practical qualification according to the new VET act: at least 50% of theory needed, to achieve the ‘Abitur’ certificate
- Financing VET: financial support of companies would be appreciated; general willingness of companies to financially participate at VET
- Start of the practical qualification at earliest in the 2nd year of education, so in the 1st year theoretical basics can be taught
- Obstacles in introducing dual VET: especially image of the VET leaving-certificate; offer of incompany trainings difficult for small companies, because of unstable order situation and staff shortage

### Summary of the current status

- The new VET act, that became law in April 2015 already considers most points, which were identified as obstacles in the feasibility study
- Companies should be more involved when developing curricula for incompany trainings
- It is recommended to develop a step by step plan to modernize the technical equipment at the schools
- Next to pedagogical qualifications of incompany trainers, practical qualifications of school teachers are necessary

### Expectations for the future

- The Slovakian-German pilot project in Nove Mesto vad Vahom decisively supports the VET reform
- Intensifying the DSIHK campaign „fit4future“ can improve the image of VET
- Accompanying supporting measures with focus on small enterprises would be useful for the pilot project

### Possible measures

- Development and implementation of structured vocational orientation
- Qualification of training consultants
- Development and implementation of analysis of incompany training potentials in small companies
- Development of practical qualifications of teachers in selected professions

Definition and testing of procedures in order to standardize the development of practical qualifications with social partners

## **II. Slovak VET pilot schemes and pilot apprenticeships**

### **1. National projects in Slovakia for supporting VET system in 2013 - 2015**

There are currently 3 national projects, which are aiming to improve the quality of VET system; State Institute of Vocational Education is responsible for their implementation.

- **Development of vocational secondary education in VET schools**

The strategic goal of the national project is to improve the quality of vocational education and training on secondary vocational schools in selected groups of courses. Implementation of the project addresses the issue of linking vocational education and training on secondary vocational schools with employers' needs, improving the quality and readiness of future graduates of secondary vocational schools in relation to their employability after graduation, cooperation between secondary vocational schools with trade and professional organizations, setting up a model multi-source financing and normative funding of secondary vocational schools, career guidance and professional orientation of pupils.

- **National system of qualifications**

The project is aimed at establishing a National System of Qualifications, the description of 1000 partial and full qualifications, setting the work system of sector councils, as well as to revise the National Qualification Framework. Within the implementation were developed: analysis, methodologies, four accredited training programs, the application software, upcoming portal for the public, and description of 1100 (partial and full) qualifications at different stages of development.

- **Promoting polytechnic training in primary schools**

There are two national projects supporting polytechnic training in primary schools, which aim to address the alarming situation of decision-making primary school students about their future career and career choices and the associated decision on the choice of secondary school:

- **Support for professional orientation of pupils of primary school to vocational education and training through the development of polytechnic education aimed at developing work skills and work with talents**
- **Support for polytechnic education in primary schools**

## **2. Other projects supporting VET system**

- Enhanced cooperation with secondary VET school in Zlaté Moravce in cooperation with 6 companies under the guidance of Austrian Chamber of Commerce,
- CVET project of Volkswagen Slovakia, to introduce dual education system,
- Project of post-secondary education in cooperation with VET school in Košice with T-Systems Slovakia,
- The cooperation with Slovak-German industry and business chamber in Nové Mesto nad Váhom,
- Danube Institute of dual education.

## **3. Project Volkswagen**

- CVET project (requalification) of Volkswagen Slovakia, to introduce dual education system,
- the provision of theory and praxis is 80%:20% in favour of praxis,
- among hundreds of applications the best 24 were selected,
- the further education program is oriented for 3 education programs; mechatronics, industry mechanics and tools mechanics,
- in year 2015, according to new legislation, VW will run these programs in formal education

## 4. Examples of a Good Practice

### 4.1. Austrian Federal Economic Chamber – WKÖ The Austrian - Slovak dual VET in the Nitra region

- Despite a high youth unemployment rate, more than 150,000 skilled worker positions will remain vacant on the Slovak labour market between 2015 and 2017, according to Slovakian official projections. In order to support Austrian companies to meet their demand for skilled workforce in Slovakia, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, financially supported by the go-international initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy **established elements of dual VET in the Region of Nitra**.
- This **pilot project** entitled “**Young Stars**” is scientifically supported by the research institute “ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET” and implemented in cooperation with 4 Austrian, 2 Slovakian and 2 German companies as well Slovakian authorities, in particular the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, and Slovakian employer associations.
- After more than two years of close cooperation between all partners involved and hard work on several implementation steps, the consortium succeeded in establishing suitable framework conditions for apprenticeship training: **beginning September 2014, 33 apprentices started their training in two pilot school classes**, where the **job profiles “metalworker” and “mechatronic”** are imparted!
- Although draft legislation intended to amend the existing legal framework for VET in Slovakia by introducing elements of dual VET on the systemic level is currently under way, the **consortium was successful in providing for crucial elements of dual VET** already under the existing legal regime:
  - By foreseeing an arrangement in which 60% of the apprenticeship training is practical in-company training, the **company becomes a training place** for the first time. Theoretical learning amounting to 40% takes place at the VET school in Zlaté Moravce.
  - The **curricula** for both job profiles were **adapted according to both, businesses’ needs** and the requirements of the VET school. This ensures a practice-oriented training that imparts labour-market relevant competences.

- The successful implementation of contracts between companies-school and companies–students as well as the introduction of motivation scholarships financed by companies represents a **first important step from a student- to an apprentice-status in terms of training relationship!** Graduates of the apprenticeship pilot programme receive a Slovakian school-leaving-certificate as well as an indenture.
- On the basis of the lessons learnt from the project, **WKÖ** actively **supports the Slovak Ministry of Education in ongoing reforms on the systemic level**, in particular in the revision of the vocational training act as well as in administration of the apprenticeship system.

As in Austria, WKÖ is responsible for the governance and administration of apprenticeship training, WKÖ is particularly well placed to provide advice on the **crucial role of intermediaries and organisations of the world of work**. These institutions **ensure that VET is geared towards the specific requirements of companies and the labour market!**

#### 4.2. Other Examples of Good Practice

- **T-Systems Slovakia and Secondary school in Košice**

Another project is organized in the ICT technologies in Kosice. The project is realized by Secondary School of Electrical Engineering in Košice, in partnership with company T-Systems Slovakia from 1 September 2013 through the three-year post-secondary higher professional education in the field of study “Computer Systems”, which is based on the close links between schools and firms. From 1 September 2015 are pupils educated in the vocational education training in the system of dual education.

- **The cooperation with Slovak-German industry and business chamber in Nové Mesto nad Váhom**

The flagship of the current German-Slovak cooperation between schools and businesses is a project implemented by the Secondary vocational school in Nove Mesto nad Vahom, where are from 1 September 2015 prepared twelve students in the field of “metalworker” and fourteen students in “mechatronic” in the dual education. Organization and promotion of employers who have entered into this project provides a Slovakia-German Chamber of Commerce (AHK).

- **Secondary vocational school in Michalovce and company BSH Drives and Pumps Ltd.**

Secondary vocational school in town Michalovce on the east of Slovakia has a good cooperation with company BSH Drives and Pumps Ltd. , which provides training for pupils in the field of "electrotechnic".

- **Secondary vocational school in Šurany and cooperation with company Osram, a.s.**

Pupils from Secondary vocational school in Šurany are prepared according the demands of employer in the company Osram, Nové Zámky, they run system of dual education. The school is involved in the Swiss-Slovak project supported through the Swiss-Slovak cooperation within the enlarged European Union, too.

### III. Implications for the Danube Academy

Based on the results of the analysis of the Slovak legislation and the VET pilot schemes, the following conclusions for the role, function and structure of the planned Danube Academy for dual education can be drawn:

- The main aim of the Danube Academy (DA) should be education and training of teachers of technical subjects and in-company trainers / instructors – focused on 7 professions resulting from a survey made by DSIHK: Tool Setter, Electrician, CNC/NC Operator, Machinist, Toolmaker, Mechatronics Technician, Machinery and Equipment Programmer
- The Danube Academy should involve a virtual network of competence centers and relevant training programs for teachers and in-company trainers / instructors of the Danube Region countries.
- Target groups of the Danube Academy should be teachers of technical subjects related to the 7 chosen professions, instructors and teachers for training.
- The Danube Academy should focus exclusively on **dual education** – the core of activities should be education and further training of the teachers and in-company trainers / instructors.
- The Danube Academy should be a qualification center for existing teachers and in-company trainers / instructors in 7 defined professions.
- The Danube Academy should be a competence center for the 7 chosen professions providing consulting to companies and schools.
- The Danube Academy should help to prepare study programs for teachers and in-company trainers / instructors of the 7 chosen professions based on the experience of BIBB, AHK and WKO.
- The Danube Academy as a center of excellence should organize networking activities for schools and companies providing VET in the 7 professions.
- An important task of the Danube Academy should be to initiate one or more pilot schools or training providers and competence centers for companies – to transfer their practice all over the country or even in other countries of the Danube Region

- The Danube Academy should support the information platforms of the chambers for the 7 chosen professions
- The Danube Academy should focus on life-long learning activities for teachers, instructors and teachers for training (to teach new applications) in order to secure the competitiveness of the companies
- The Danube Academy should organize a best practice exchange within the Danube Region – also through mobility actions (e.g. Erasmus+) of teachers for training, instructors and technical teachers.
- The Danube Academy should be – as competence center – a contact point for innovation in dual VET for the 7 professions in the Danube Region. A task should be the further development of European projects in order to secure the sustainability of the academy.
- The Danube Academy should be a central point for starting marketing and communication activities to promote dual VET in Slovakia and the Danube Region.

## Summary

Vocational Education and Training (VET) has a strong tradition in Slovakia and it is one of the essential components of education here. The adoption of Act no. 61/2015 Coll. of vocational education and training, the Slovak Republic ranked among the countries which implement vocational education and training in the form of dual education. The new legislation is the result of a process of transformation of vocational education and training and operation of employers as one of the subjects of coordination of vocational education and training. Part of the review is the interpretation of relevant sections of the Act, the comparison with the German legislation, comments on the content of the law by the project partners as well as visions of the future.

One of the deciding factors in the success of introducing a dual system of education in Slovakia is long-term exposure of German and Austrian companies, especially in the automotive industry, mechanical engineering and electrical engineering as bearers of experiences with the dual education in these countries. Support for vocational education and training at European level is part of the Europe 2020 strategy. Support of vocational education and training is based on promoting the elements of the dual system of education. The European Commission calls on Member States and employers and entrepreneurs that are committed to promote quality improve the image and increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training in Europe.

In this sense, Slovak Republic already in December 2012 in Berlin declared its support for high-quality, refurbished, attractive vocational education and training, linked to labour market needs, co-responsibility of the social partners and the private sector for the quality of vocational education and training by signing a memorandum of cooperation in vocational education and training in Europe and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Austrian chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Education, Science, research and Sport of Slovakia.

Following the above activities were underway in Slovakia several projects in cooperation with German and Austrian companies in the implementation of dual training into practice and linking vocational education and training to labour market needs. The review maps the existing pilot projects and schemes that showed how is moving Slovak VET.

As part of this project ERASMUS +, we would like to contribute to a comprehensive reform of the vocational education and training and the creation of a centre for vocational education and training in the dual training that would provide training of vocational teachers and teachers of vocational training as well as consulting for schools, employers and all who are involved in the dual system of education in technical fields.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovak Republic

Improving the quality of practical training with an employer can project contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 strategy and the Bruges Communiqué.