



## The context of apprenticeships and work-based learning in Slovakia

The Slovak Republic vocational and education training (VET) system is marked by a relative lack of work-based learning and weak labour market outcomes among school-based VET programmes. Moreover, demographic decline and strong competition from academic education are putting pressure on the Slovak Republic VET system. Recent legislation has sought to tackle these challenges by introducing a dual style apprenticeship system.

Employers are dissatisfied with VET graduates' competences: this is a result of VET being underfinanced and funding mechanisms based on number of learners, not the quality of learning outcomes. Changing young people's education preferences and broken links between the worlds of work and education also play a role.

There is no genuine apprenticeship in Slovakia although learners in school-based three-year programmes comprising high share of work-based learning were sometimes called apprentices. This term, however, disappeared from legislation which denotes all initial VET learners as students and not employees of companies where the training takes place. This also applies to the newly introduced dual VET.

In 2015, a new VET Act (61/2015) was adopted. It was initiated by employer representatives, particularly from the automotive industry. The act supports closer school-company partnerships and encourages the shift to labour market demand-driven VET. Although the reform has been inspired by German-speaking countries, Slovak dual VET is different.

In the new approach, companies take responsibility for training provision. They find learners and sign individual training contracts that must be complemented by an institutional contract between the company and a VET school.

This contract describes the partners' roles and responsibilities. Companies are not obliged to offer future employment to contracted learners. In contrast to traditional apprentices, learners in dual VET in Slovakia are students and not employees of a company that provides training. Companies can even partially (up to 40%) delegate the training back to schools.

There are 19 programmes delivered as dual VET, of which 10 lead to a certificate of apprenticeship, eight offer a matura certificate together with a certificate of apprenticeship and one leads to absolutorium. Those qualifications most in demand by companies are mechanics-machine setters, car



mechanics, mechanics-mechatronics technicians and computing systems specialists. In total, 32.6% of the available training places were filled in 2015/16. Art schools opted out of the system with the 2018 novelization.

### Creative Apprenticeships in Slovakia

In terms of creative apprenticeships or in-company training in CCI in Slovakia, these are to a large extent person-based in the sense that external education, apprenticeship or in-company training is usually coordinated by students themselves. Any form of external learning is carried out under supervision of experienced mentors, tutors or experts in the specific creative field. Opting for a summer school or workshop sessions are one of the easiest and most common ways how to complete a compulsory internship required by educational institution. Apart from person-based approach, there are also running school-company (CCI employers) partnerships although the cooperation is rather unique and currently managed by very little number of schools.

CCI employers only rarely participate in cooperation with VET providers, since their time and resources are consumed in struggle to support their own living, they do not have long-term commitments with educational bodies. Therefore, we can say that creative apprenticeships in Slovakia are strongly based on a motivation coming from a student, VET provider and employer.



*Students of Interior design at the Design school completing their in-company training in IKEA Bratislava*