

# Introduction of dual training in Slovakia

## Initial steps towards closer cooperation between schools and companies

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**In 2015, Slovakia passed a new vocational education and training act which also encompasses the introduction of dual training.<sup>1</sup> Its provisions also include stipulations governing new opportunities for cooperation between the state and trade and industry at a national level and between schools and business both regionally and locally. This article presents these regulations and describes initial experiences with implementation by taking the development of training programmes for shoe makers as an example.**

### Cooperation in dual training in Slovakia

Dual training in Slovakia is governed by training regulations at a state and school level. These are the so-called training programmes. The state training programmes provide a framework in which a school can structure training in conjunction with a company. The specific design of such training is stipulated in the school-based training programmes. The proportion of practical learning undertaken at the company must be at least 60 per cent. Various state and trade and industry stakeholders work together at both levels to develop these programmes.

The *state training programmes* are developed by representatives from trade and industry and from the schools via a process which is coordinated by the State Institute for Vocational Education and Training (ŠIOV), an institution which is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and operates in a similar way to BIBB. For this purpose, the

ŠIOV appoints a commission, in which the state training programme is drawn up by representatives from schools and companies and from the umbrella organisation of the Slovakian chambers or the relevant sector associations. The ŠIOV assumes a coordinating role as well as being responsible for formal and legal scrutiny of the training programmes developed. Content development is carried out by representatives from practice. Finally, the state training programmes are definitively adopted by the Ministry of Education.

The school-based training programmes are jointly developed by a school and one or more cooperating companies. Within the scope of this programme, the state training programme may be amended to an extent of up to 30 per cent in order to take particular local circumstances and the needs of the company into account. School-based training programmes are mostly developed bilaterally and are subsequently scrutinised by the regional chambers. The focus of this scrutiny is to ascertain that the school-based programme corresponds to the state training programme in terms of content and that due consideration is according to regional labour market requirements. The chamber also checks that the tasks included in final examinations harmonise with the school-based training programme.

The statutory stipulations merely prescribe which parties should be integrated into the development process rather than setting out any specific procedural stages. For this reason, and in order to support the companies and schools, the sector associations and the umbrella organisation of the Slovakian chambers were involved in preparing a "Guide to the implementation of dual training for employers, vocational schools and school administration bodies". This provides assistance in realisation of the new system and offers a structured response to all related questions.

#### BIBB research project "Development of national vocational qualification and training standards – A European comparison of stakeholders, processes and design"

The aim of the project is to analyse cooperation between stakeholders involved in VET in six selected countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Slovakia and Portugal). Cooperation is compared by using the development of training regulations as an example.

Project term: 2015–2018

Further information: [www2.bibb.de/bibbtools/de/ssl/dapro.php?proj=1.5.313](http://www2.bibb.de/bibbtools/de/ssl/dapro.php?proj=1.5.313)

<sup>1</sup> Zákon č. 61/2015 Z. z. o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov, ktorý o. i. ustanovuje systém duálneho vzdelávania; English version: [www.minedu.sk/data/att/9244.pdf](http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/9244.pdf) (retrieved: 31.01.2018)

Table  
Stakeholders interviewed

Stakeholder	Number	Persons interviewed
School	1	3 (school principal, teachers)
Company	2	3 (heads of human resources and training)
Chamber	2	4 (senior management employees)

## Implementation in the shoe making sector

A BIBB research project (cf. Information Box) investigated how successful the implementation of the new statutory stipulations is proving to be in practice. One of the aspects studied was the newly developed training programme for the occupation of shoe maker. For this purpose, guided interviews were conducted with the stakeholders involved in the development process (cf. Table).

### Development of the state training programme

Over recent years, shoe making training in Slovakia had come to a standstill. The two largest shoe making companies in Slovakia (which are located in different regions) therefore decided to redesign the training programme on the basis of the new legal situation. They joined forces with the two schools in their regions and approached the ŠIOV with a view to initiating a state training programme. Development of content took place without regular involvement by the ŠIOV, and the stakeholders very quickly experienced difficulties in shaping the process because the assistance provided was frequently couched in terms that were too vague. “Our only aids in structuring the procedure were the law and the handbook<sup>2</sup>. [...] We are autodidacts.” (school principal).

The stakeholders resolved the challenge by forming working groups and defining work packages. “We then distributed the tasks amongst ourselves depending on experience and competences.” (school principal). The function taken on by the ŠIOV in the development process tended to be of a monitoring nature and essentially consisted of “scrutinising the programme on the basis of formal and legal criteria once it had been drawn up and submitting it to the Ministry of Education for approval.” (school principal).

### Development of the school-based training programme

The next stage involved substantiating the state training programme between the school and the company providing training. Aspects such as the content and scope of the

theoretical and practical learning units were stipulated in the school-based training programme, and the stakeholders also reached agreement on which parts of the practical teaching might need to be imparted by the school should the company not be in a position to deliver the full range of practical tasks. They also availed themselves of the option of adapting the training programme by up to 30 per cent to meet specific regional or company circumstances because the two companies deploy different forms of production. For this reason, the school-based training programme provides that trainees are able to learn about both types of manufacturing. The basic theoretical principles of these two production forms are imparted at the schools, although the focus is in each case placed upon the type of production used by the cooperating company.

Formal and content scrutiny for the programme was carried out by the chamber responsible. The objective here was to identify “whether the school-based training programmes take account of the requirements of the labour market [...] and whether] issues relating to the final examination or upper secondary examination conducted by the schools [...] are in harmony with the school-based training programme” (chamber representative).

### Influence of the companies strengthened – companies encouraged to take the initiative

The new Slovakian law on dual VET enables companies to exert an influence on the structuring of the state and school-based training programme. The example from the shoe making sector makes it clear that companies are taking advantage of this newly created opportunity and shows how they are going about doing so. In this specific case, co-operation between the school and trade and industry even extended beyond joint development of the training programme and the division of practical teaching. Company representatives, for example, worked to develop teaching material. In the light of a shortage of qualified teaching staff, one company even made its trainers available to the school in order to deliver theoretical content.

These newly established forms of cooperation at a regional or local basis seem to be conducive to the need to provide training that is closely allied to the need for skilled workers. By way of contrast, there is a desire for clearer stipulations for the development of state training programmes.

This and other weaknesses in the law which do not relate to specific cooperation between the school and trade and industry have led to calls from companies for an evaluation and reform of the act. ◀

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<sup>2</sup> “Handbook” in this case refers to the “Guide to the implementation of dual training for employers, vocational schools and school administration bodies”.