



O14 Comparative analysis of newly developed educational programs in Slovakia with the existing educational programs in Austria and Germany

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Newport Group, a.s., Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, Slovenská technická univerzita v Bratislave, Slovak Business Agency, Berufsförderungsinstitut Oberösterreich, Europäisches Bildungswerk für Beruf und Gesellschaft

Project SAGA for VET (Slovak Austrian German Alliance for Vocational Education and Training) is an innovative project, which helps with systematic and program rebuilding of the Slovak educational environment. The project aims to use direct know-how and good practice with educational programs in German speaking countries (Germany and Austria), and it is also the answer to the necessity to introduce good practice elements from dual education precisely from the German speaking countries. Taking into consideration the historical, legislative and geographical differences, it is not possible to transplant the educational programs as a block. The goal was rather to look for an optimal solution when it comes to the content and form of the educational programs in regards with the job market in Slovakia. The project has been verified through pilot testing of the accredited educational programs with best practice components included and transferred from project partners. These should later serve as a model for the all-over modification of the Slovak system of vocational education.

Introduction of new and innovative educational programs was, within the scope of this project, realized in compliance with the needs of the small and medium size enterprises and the job market, through accredited educational programs based on the Act on life-long learning (“zákon č. 568/2009 Z.z”). It should be outlined that a very significant part of education was made up of practice.

Since the new educational programs were not accredited in Slovakia in a dual form, the training of trainers took place in Austria and Germany. When successfully completing the training, the educated trainers became supervisors and lecturers of the educational programs in Slovakia. In cooperation with them, the Slovak partners created the educational courses (educational programs and study materials) needed for successful accreditation of these courses as educational programs in compliance with Slovak regulations. After the successful accreditation, educational programs were tested on a selected sample of participants with fewer opportunities (jobseekers selected by the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in different regions of Slovakia, with respect to further regional applicability). Finally, in frame of the joint evaluation process of the knowledge transferred and results achieved, we expect there will be a feedback provided to the representatives of German and Austrian job markets at working groups' sessions taking place together with foreign project partners. Given the fact that the systems are not transferred fully but partially (transfer of dual education elements considering the local specifics in Slovakia), due to the legislative environment, the findings and results of the transfer, and the innovative solutions can be retroactively transferred to Austria and Germany. They can serve as innovative approaches for effective modification of the practice by the project partners, in frame of the existing educational programs.

The findings and results of the transfer of dual educational elements will be at the same time applicable in frame of similar projects in the future, what makes the whole process of introducing these systemic changes more effective. The target group of unemployed is also very important, as they become a workforce with the required qualification in the regions. Furthermore, an indirect beneficiary is also identified – it

is the small and medium size enterprises, which are pillars of the economies in all partner countries.

The SAGA for VET project is innovative in many ways. It is focused on the job market through new dual educational programs, accredited based on the Act on life-long learning, with an exact and fast measurability and deployability of results and impacts of actions at the job market. The project is also focused on the target group of small and medium size enterprises, while in their case it is not possible to think of massive education of job seekers in a narrow specialization, but only to consider a perspective that the trained individuals will become employed. Guaranty of the quality and effectiveness of transferred innovative know-how from abroad to Slovakia is ensured by the involvement of a Slovak academic workplace, which has got considerable experience with implementation of innovative educational methods at the Slovak job market, as well as with considering the requirements of foreign companies. At the same time, the project helps to popularize the measures of introducing dual education, resulting from the amendment to the Act on vocational education and training.

While introducing innovative elements of education and fulfilling the project goals, it was essential to study the principles of dual educational systems in Austria and Germany in details, and to visit model educational workplaces, workplaces of practical training in small local, as well as in big national manufacturing companies. The companies visited go as follow: Berufsförderungsinstitut Oberösterreich Linz, EBBG Europäisches Bildungswerk für Beruf und Gesellschaft Magdeburg, Lehrwerkstätte der Linz AG, Lehrwerkstätte Voest Alpine Linz, UPM Laakirchen Lehrwerkstätte und Kläranlage, Berufsschule Lilienfeld, Berufsschule 3 Linz, MAGNA Lehrwerkstätte Graz, Sattlerei Winklmayr Wels, WIFI Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut Linz.

The differences in legislative frames of vocational education were obvious at first sight, not mentioning the full-fledged conditions for the practical training of individual qualifications created by the employers. Therefore, it was possible to identify and implement only those educational approaches, which are not in conflict with the legislative conditions given in the Slovak system of vocational education. Many effective and motivating conditions of vocational education will certainly find their place also in the Slovak job training system and system of re-qualifications, answering the acute needs of the job market, especially in industrially less developed regions of Slovakia. Additionally, it is also important to activate the employers, so that they understand that only through their active attitude towards education, they can influence the educational frames and gain the workforce prepared appropriately and in a way, it is ready to be put into production right away.

Educational programs

After analysing the job market and its needs, short qualifications in Slovak regions were identified and together with the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the following professions were selected as basis for the educational programs:

- Machine engineer – Locksmith
- Worker in water supply
- Car upholsterer
- Drywall installer
- Retail worker
- Wholesaler

For these professions, the same or similar educational courses were accredited at our foreign partners' side, as well as proper study fields settled according to the legal frame valid in home country. This made it much easier to get familiar with the content and range of the theoretical and practical training, responsibilities of all the educational actors in relation to one another, and it gave a lot of possibilities to compare pros and cons of the educational programs in the selected countries.

Based on the studies of study materials, personal experience gained from lectors during the visits of foreign educational companies and partners BFI OÖ and EBBG, the educational programs were prepared and accredited for the above mentioned professions, taking into consideration all the collected know-how on best practices. Structure of the programs complies with the legislative requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic when it comes to the accreditation of educational programs. It also reflects the practice part which is required from dual educational programs, with a considerable extent of professional practice at a real employer. Additionally, the participants of the requalification who took part in the pilot training, gained qualification which has got a real use, especially in those regional enterprises and operations, where the education and training took place.

The accreditation files were not only elaborated in Slovak language, but also translated to English and German, what made it way easier to elaborate the comparative analysis using the materials of all the project partners.

Frame structure of the educational programs and graduate profiles

Modular educational program MACHINE ENGINEER – LOCKSMITH (400 hours)

Module: Fundamentals of manual metalworking – 165 hours

Module: Fundamentals of machining – 115 hours

Module: Fundamentals of assembly technology – 120 hours

The graduate of the education program can characterize basic professional terminology in engineering. He is able to select and prepare the necessary working tools, materials and raw materials for a particular technological process and to use them efficiently. He knows manual handling of metals. He can machine metal and non-metallic materials. He is able use different types of mechanized tools.

Modular educational program WORKER IN WATER SUPPLY (400 hours)

Module: Technical drawing – 154 hours

Module: Basics of engineering – 100 hours

Module: Operation, service and maintenance of water supply and sewerage systems – 146 hours

Graduate of the module knows the basic auxiliary activities, mostly manual, mainly in the water supply sector in the operation, service and maintenance of public water mains and public sewers. He can perform activities in the operation, cleaning and disinfection of water supply networks. He knows the principles of protection of the public water supply system. He is able to perform basic and auxiliary works in sewage treatment plants and in sewage cleaning.

Modular educational program CAR UPHOLSTERER (300 hours)

Module: Material for upholstery – 40 hours

Module: Preparation and processing of materials for upholstery – 162 hours

Module: Upholstery of car interiors – 98 hours

Graduate of the training program knows the correct procedure for the processing of upholstery materials. He can prepare and use the tools, utensils, instruments and machines necessary for upholstery. He can prepare, measure, cut textile, leather, fur and synthetic or other base material. Manually or mechanically fabricates the upholstery by sewing, trimming, coating and completing the products by decorating and fastening the ornaments.

Modular educational program DRYWALL INSTALLER (500 hours)

Topic: Professional drawing – 20 hours

Topic: Materials used in construction – 100 hours

Topic: Handmade plasterboard processing – 94 hours

Topic: Plasterboard constructions – 190 hours

Topic: Surface treatment of plasterboard constructions – 96 hours

The graduate of the education program acquires knowledge about the methods of displaying in construction, types of building drawings and marking various building materials in building documentation. He knows and understands drawings of various building structures. He has professional knowledge about types of building materials and masonry materials both natural and technically produced. He recognizes different types of building and insulating materials and can appropriately determine their use.

Modular educational program RETAIL WORKER (200 hours)

Module: Retail – 28 hours

Module: Retail operations – 60 hours

Module: Sale of goods – 52 hours

Module: Work with a cash register – 60 hours

The module learning program is designed for people who are interested in acquiring professional knowledge and practical skills in retail. The education program is designed in a content, material and personal way so that the successful graduate of the education program acquires comprehensive knowledge and skills and can apply to the labour market.

Modular educational program WHOLESALER (200 hours)

Module: Wholesale enterprise – 18 hours

Module: Wholesale operations – 52 hours

Module: Evidence in wholesale trade – 64 hours

Module: Inventory – 42 hours

Module: Damage, liability for damages – 24 hours

The module learning program is designed for people who are interested in acquiring professional knowledge and practical skills in wholesale trade. The education program is designed in a content, material and personal way so that the successful graduate of the education program acquires comprehensive knowledge and skills and can apply to the labour market.

Comparative analysis of the selected aspects of educational programs

While comparing the accreditation files and how they are applied during the implementation of educational programs in Slovakia, Austria and Germany, it is possible to define a few differences. Mostly they are given by the strict national legislatives in the sphere of education, and also by the status of the student/person being requalified in the educational system. This is the reason why there are

essential differences in the possibilities we have got during the implementation of educational programs. The project had no ambition to enforce legislative changes, but to incorporate know-how and practice into the actual accreditation frame, which was not in contradiction with the national law.

The most important thing is that in Germany and also in Austria the person being requalified starts his/her training as an employee, respectively a potential employee of a concrete company with a job contract. It is very straightforward and while doing it this way, means and time are not wasted with training such people, who are interested in requalification only formally, or for other reasons than the necessity to get employed. In Slovakia, the age of a person being retrained is not particularly regulated or limited, which cannot be said about the regulations abroad in our partner countries (depending on the type of the training).

In Austria, a juvenile education process (full-time study) or a retraining model of education for people over 18 (up to 50 years of age), who cannot apply for one of the regular educational practices or need retraining to a higher level, respectively to another qualification, is put in place. The need for the professions is determined by the AMS (Arbeitsmarktservice) for each region specifically (differently, as it is needed). The information on retraining programs being open has its legal form and content. The disclosure contains precisely defined requirements and legal assumptions. The publication defines exactly the target group and number of places, and specifies the graduate profile and suitability for specific job positions. Similarly to the Slovak regulations, there are precisely defined training modules and amount of hours in each module. There is a defined number of trainers and their qualifications for the given module, the workspaces are defined (both for theory and practice), and also the location (which does not apply in the Slovak system and therefore accreditation can be used by its holder in any location). However, the specific location (municipality, firm) gives a detailed picture of the employability and a proper reference to the employer, which is an advantage and guarantee of deployability and employability for the persons being requalified in the given region.

The educational program has got three modules: A (optional basic topics such as engineering, electrical engineering, IT, etc.), B (modular units for specific technologies such as chip machining, welding, heavy-current, data networks, etc.) and C (deeper qualification in the selected technology). B and C modules obligatory take place at certified educational establishments, what can be for example an apprentice training centre in a company or a special training centre for practical training. This modular stratification is uniform for each qualification and is specifically defined by the law – BAG (Berufausbildungsgesetz). Regular apprenticeship (dual, trial) modular education for adolescents has a duration of 3.5 years, what is followed by the possibility of deepening knowledge in vocational schools (3x10 + 1x5 weeks) and then by individual training to gain higher level expertise. The same training program can be implemented in three modules, each lasting 6 weeks, meant for re-qualification of persons over 18 years of age, while additionally to the necessary theory, the focus here is put on gaining professional skills. In the Slovak system, the

number of modules of the teaching program is not fixed, and the variability of the numbers and content of the modules is determined by the possibilities of the accreditation holder. In the Austrian model, the training is made up of 20 % of theoretical teaching at schools (e.g. Arbeitsschule) and 80 % is devoted to practical training in practical training centres (e.g. school workshops). Such education is referred to as dual education (high practical content) – the manufacturing companies with no doubts prefer this type of education and retraining.

Since the persons being requalified usually dispose of basic education (however in Slovakia they often have not got completed primary school attendance and lack working habits), it is recommended as part of requalification, that prior to the professional modules, an introductory module would be offered to the participants. This would provide the trainees with a complete overview of the available traineeships followed by certain learning modules. The participants could add to their requalification courses those unique learning programs, they prefer and choose to have – all this within the frame of the valid system.

In Germany, the ratio of 30 % of theoretical teaching and 70 % of practical training is usually applied in the dual system of education. Adepts are required to have completed basic education, respectively if this condition is not fulfilled for any reason, it is the duty of the adepts to pass a test which proves their knowledge necessary for successful completion of the requalification (this has not been applied in Slovak conditions yet, but it would make sense to use for example in case of long-term unemployed, what could thus increase the success of education itself).

German educational programs are very much like the Austrian ones, especially when it comes to their modular structure and legislative regulations. Additionally, the special modules contain not only professional content but also information on environmental protection and waste management – this is also the case of such professions as mason/drywall installer or retail worker. It is given by the decision making in constituent states and by regulations for work and communal environment.

The situation is similar also in the case of trainings in health protection and safety at work, where a significant part is devoted for example to safeguarding escape routes, storing dangerous or otherwise harmful substances, etc., and it does not matter if it is at a construction or in a warehouse. Similarly, the fire protection is an integral part of additional educational modules.

In Slovakia, the requalification happens in three different ways. The jobseekers registered at labour offices have different possibilities to get trained:

- training provided by the employment office,
- training provided thanks to the employee's own initiative,
- requalification.

Training provided by the employment office is outsourced to an external supplier based on public procurement and the candidate may receive a training grant of 100 % of the costs.

Training provided thanks to the jobseekers' own initiative – the candidate finds the adequate training, direct consequence of which will be his/her entry into employment or self-employment and after completing the training, the employment office will pay the applicant 100 % of the costs.

Within the RE-PAS requalification process, the candidate chooses the requalification course and the provider who will provide it and after completing the training, the employment office will pay the applicant 100 % of the costs.

When comparing the Slovak and foreign models, the most of compliant moments can be found in the RE-PAS model, which is currently the most popular tool aimed at supporting inclusion of the unemployed in the labour market by increasing their employability. It is an innovative approach to ensure the training of the job seekers while taking into account the regional requirements of individuals. This helps to increase the job seekers' competences in order to succeed at the labour market by acquiring the required knowledge, skills and competences during the requalification course, and all of that in a synergy with the need of regional employers.

The RE-PAS model is an ideal solution for all accredited educational courses, which are the outputs of the SAGA for VET project.

Comparison of the trainings has shown a number of new facts and practices that are of greater importance when working with the students and can be considered as an area that was not paid attention to in the process of requalification in Slovakia. In the Slovak accreditation process, the professionalism of the team of trainers, guarantors and lecturers is strictly considered, so that there is no doubt about the professional aspects of the theoretical and practical content of the programs provided.

Both in the Austrian and German models there are additional special modules taking into account the person being requalified and the need for his/her specialization in specific areas.

It is the social aspect of the community in which the adept lives and comes from (e.g. long-term unemployed, marginalized groups, people with disordered personal development), what he/she needs to get adapted into the employment and what habits he/she needs to dispose of in order not to be disqualified in the group of other employees.

Another aspect of complementary education is the deepening and acquiring of learning and working habits, which means that job seekers are familiar with categories such as quality work performance, work effort, relations of subordination and superiority at the workplace, etc.

Frequently, the core of labour regulation and information on the rights and duties of a regular employee are included in the supplementary module.

Finally, the adepts (especially in some special professions) get familiar with health protection and safety at work regulations; they are informed about the potential health risks due to the use of chemicals (or due to the use of banned substances and/or narcotics at work). An important and up-to-date element of trainings is also the environmental protection, to an extent necessary for the performance of a profession, and the legislative framework on waste management – these aspects are largely absent in the educational programs existing under the Slovak model.

The comparative analysis shows that all project partners, disposing of requalification programs in their portfolio, have the opportunity to take over several practices and procedures applied, in order to improve both the content and the formal aspects of the courses, and thus increase the employability of retrained workers at the national and international labour markets, as well as the personal benefit of individual participants. The Slovak legislation is significantly more open to the Austrian and German regulations when creating the content of educational programs. The applicant can very flexibly include appropriate modules according to the needs of both local jobseekers and companies. An important aspect of the Austrian and German models is the obligation to have a specific manufacturing company included in the educational program and to participate in practical vocational training. This ensures that practical training is provided by companies with accreditation for such activity, with trained and qualified staff and sufficient manufacturing facilities.

Based on the results of the comparative analysis, it is possible to summarize a couple recommendations for the state authorities in Slovakia, Austria and Germany, with an aim of incorporating appropriate procedures and content into the templates and frameworks of the legal regulations for dual education in the field of retraining educational programs.