
TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Building up competences for
inclusive, green and digitalised
vocational education and training

SLOVENIA



Teachers and trainers in a changing world

Slovenia

Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised
vocational education and training (VET)

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Training of VET teachers and trainers is constantly included in the national policy agenda in Slovenia. The project Reform of Vocational Education 2016-2021 focused on the pilot implementation of the apprenticeship and individualisation implementation model (Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET, CPI 2021). In the scope of the project a renewed educational programme for mentors for students during on the practical training with work was prepared and a common system of CPD programmes was established.

Like other countries, Slovenia is facing problems with the ageing teaching force, as in upper secondary education, the share of teachers below 30 years of age is below 5% (2018 data), compared to 2005 data the share has decreased by approximately 5% (OECD, 2020) ⁽¹⁾. The reason for the situation is that firstly that generation of students is smaller and the secondly that during the last economic crisis employment of young teachers was limited. To counter this issue, the promotion of the teaching profession is one of the aims of the next ESF programme period.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic Slovenian schools were closed for several months and the instruction went online. An evaluation of practical training at the workplace (PTW) during the pandemic was carried out in the summer of 2020 (Klarič in Mažgon, 2020). The authors were mainly interested in how the implementation of WBL took place in the 2019/20 school year, especially during the measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that, despite the pandemic, more than half of the teachers surveyed stated that they had implemented the full scope of the planned WBL and as many as 55% of the respondents stated that all planned WBL goals had been achieved (ibid., p. 34). According to the teachers, the biggest obstacle to the implementation of WBL was that the employers did not allow the implementation of WBL due to the newly emerged situation. Class teachers also reported on the unresponsiveness of students and their low motivation to participate, and also highlighted the issue of students from other countries and students from socially weaker backgrounds. Among the good practices of PTW implementation, they pointed out the implementation of practice at home, but this was only possible for specific professional fields (pre-school education, gastronomy, tourism, food industry). This

(1) https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2020_69096873-en
p. 434, p. 432.

form of PTW implementation could only take place under the condition of great involvement of teachers. (ibid., p. 35-36).

CHAPTER 2. Types of teaching and training professionals

2.1. Main types

There are different types of teaching and training professionals in Slovenian VET programmes (Initial education for teachers working in early childhood and school education):

- (a) teachers of general education subjects, employed at the VET school,
- (b) teachers for professional theory in vocational modules employed at the VET school,
- (c) teachers for practical lessons in vocational modules employed at the VET school,
- (d) PTW coordinators in the VET school,
- (e) school counsellors,
- (f) librarians,

Employed by the companies

- (a) in-company mentors.

Initial education and training (IVET) in Slovenia is defined as vocational education and training carried out by the upper secondary schools, usually before entering professional working life (IVET Europe 2008). The IVET programmes are also available to adults, they are provided by upper secondary schools and other VET providers

2.2. VET schools

There are four types of institutions delivering VET:

- (a) Upper-secondary public schools, also organised as school centres that can include several schools (VET, general upper secondary schools and Higher VET schools);
- (b) Public schools for special education needs students (SEN) children;
- (c) Public adult education providers (financed by municipalities);
- (d) Private adult education providers of IVET programmes.

2.3. Teaching and training professionals by type of VET school

There are several categories of teachers and training professionals (see Section 2.1.) who teach and work in VET, but they are not differentiated by the type of VET school or programme.

All pre-university education institutions for youth including IVET employ school counsellors. They offer an organised form of support to all participants in educational institutions. This form of institutional support has a long-established tradition in all levels of education. The basic principles are preventive and curative work with students, teachers, school management and cooperation with external institutions if necessary. During and after the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, several tasks of the school counselling service have been focused on curative activities of support for students who failed to follow the schoolwork during the distance school period in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years (Gregorčič Mrvar et al., 2020).

Project learning for young adults programme (*Projektno učenje mlajših odraslih*, PUM-O) is a second chance programme targeting the unemployed and job seekers not enrolled in education (NEETs), and focusing on early leavers from education and training (aged 15 to 26). The Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ) selects programme providers and makes referrals of the job-seekers and unemployed to the programme. Programme aims to support social inclusion of vulnerable young adults through education and/or work ⁽²⁾. Teaching professionals in this programme are PUM-O mentors, they have to have a university degree and passed a special programme for PUM-O mentors. The programme was developed by the Slovenian Adult Education Centre ⁽³⁾. We must emphasise that PUM-O is not a publicly recognised programme from the field of education and training, rather it has been adjusted to the needs of the labour market. The mentors are not specified as pedagogical staff in education who are otherwise regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI) and Adult Education Act (ZIO).

Another second chance programme is the Production school (*Produkcijska šola*) ⁽⁴⁾ intended predominantly for young people between the ages of 15 and 18 who, for various reasons (mostly emotional and behavioural issues), have dropped out of upper secondary school and/or did not fulfil their basic education obligations.

(2) https://www.ess.gov.si/iskalci_zaposlitve/programi/usposabljanje_in_izobrazevanje/pum-o

(3) <https://izobrazevanje.acs.si/dokumenti/N-1364-1.pdf>

(4) <https://www.mdj.si/produkcijaska-sola/>

Teachers and school counsellors are university graduated social pedagogues or graduates of other pedagogical study programmes who later acquired additional public qualification in the field of social pedagogy (a one-year upskilling programme at the university).

CHAPTER 3. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

3.1. Legislation

Employment requirements for teachers are regulated by:

- (a) Organisation and Financing of Education Act (*Zakon o organizaciji vzgoje in izobraževanja*, first adopted in 1996, changes range from 2007 - 2021), which sets out the general conditions the teachers have to fulfil to be able to teach ⁽⁵⁾.
- (b) Rules on the Education of Teachers and Other Expert Workers in Vocational and Professional Education (*Pravilnik o izobrazbi učiteljev in drugih strokovnih delavcev v poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju*, 2011 and 2012) which sets out the required level of qualifications the teachers have to fulfil to be able to teach by individual subject, while the area/field of study for teachers of an individual subject or module is defined by the education programme ⁽⁶⁾.
- (c) Rules on the teaching certification examination (*Pravilnik o strokovnem izpitu strokovnih delavcev na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja*, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2014 and 2015) which set out the conditions for the performance, scope, content, organisation and procedure of the professional examination for teachers ⁽⁷⁾.

The knowledge that a teacher of an individual subject or vocational module has to possess is specified in each education programme.

The continuous professional development (CPD) of VET teachers is regulated by the following legislation:

- (a) Organisation and Financing of Education Act (*Zakon o organizaciji vzgoje in izobraževanja*, changes range from 2007 to 2021), which defines promotion into titles, as well CPD as a right and work obligation of teachers.
- (b) Rules on the selection and co-funding of further education and training programmes for educational professionals (*Pravilnik o izboru in sofinanciranju programov nadaljnje izobraževanja in usposabljanja strokovnih delavcev v vzgoji in izobraževanju*, 2017 and 2020) which defines the conditions, manner and procedure of professional development of teachers and headmasters, as

⁽⁵⁾ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO445>

⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV10817>

⁽⁷⁾ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV6698>

- well as the offer and financing of the professional development programmes ⁽⁸⁾.
- (c) Rules awarding grants (*Pravilnik o dodeljevanju študijskih pomoči strokovnim delavcem na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja*, 2010) which define the Government financial support to teachers wanting to qualify/ requalify to teach another/other subject ⁽⁹⁾.
 - (d) Education staff promotion rules (*Pravilnik o napredovanju zaposlenih v vzgoji in izobraževanju v nazive*, 2002, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2020) regulate the promotion of staff to professional titles (mentor, advisor and counsellor) ⁽¹⁰⁾.
 - (e) Collective Agreement for the Education Sector in the Republic of Slovenia (*Kolektivna pogodba za dejavnost vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji*, first adopted in 1994, changes range from 1995-2021) concluded between the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Unions from the field of education ⁽¹¹⁾.

3.2. Qualification and competence requirements

The required qualifications to enter the teaching profession in IVET may be classified as follows (Lenič, Mali in Šlander 2016):

- (a) teachers of general education subjects in IVET must possess a university degree or second cycle degree (ISCED 767, ISCED 766), pedagogical/andragogical training and must have passed the state professional exam;
- (b) teachers of vocational modules in IVET:
 - (i) teachers of theoretical contents in IVET must possess at least first cycle degree (ISCED 645, ISCED 655), pedagogical/andragogical training and have passed the state professional exam;
 - (ii) teachers of practical lessons in IVET must possess at least technical upper secondary education (ISCED 354), pedagogical/andragogical training, have passed the state professional exam, and have at least three years of relevant work experience from the economic sector.

Work experience is a condition for the teachers of practical lessons, but not for the others.

⁽⁸⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV13060>

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV10462>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV4272>

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=KOLP19>

As is evident from the above classification, all VET teachers must possess pedagogical/andragogical training and pass a state professional exam. This, however, differs in terms of the level of educational qualification, which ranges from technical upper secondary onwards (Lenič, Mali in Šlander 2016).

Passing the state professional exam, regulated by the Rules on the teaching certification examination (*Pravilnik o strokovnem izpitu strokovnih delavcev na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja*, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2014 and 2015) ⁽¹²⁾, is an essential condition for working in a school as a teacher.

State professional exams are set at the Ministry of Education. Examination candidates must have suitable subject-specific qualifications and have successfully completed five observed lessons. Observed lessons are assessed by a mentor and the headmaster in the school. The exam is oral and takes place before an examination panel. It consists of three parts:

- (a) constitutional system of Slovenia and the EU and regulations on human rights and children's rights;
- (b) school legislation; and
- (c) knowledge of the teaching language.

After successfully passing the examination, candidates receive a state professional exam certificate that entitles them to apply for a permanent position in a school ⁽¹³⁾.

3.3. Initial training programmes

The system of initial teacher's education is autonomously determined by universities or higher education institutions, regulated by the Higher Education Act (*Zakon o visokem šolstvu*, changes range from 2012 to 2021). The aims and goals of teacher education are based on the fundamental values and principles of the educational system in Slovenia: human rights and justice, students' and teachers' autonomy, and quality (Krek (ed.), 1996; 2011).

There is no special training for VET teachers, they have to fulfil the same conditions as teachers in general upper secondary education, the exception being teachers of practical lessons for which a lower level of education will suffice. On the other hand, when professionals intend to teach in VET schools and do not possess pedagogical/andragogical education, they can acquire this in

⁽¹²⁾ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV6698>

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.gov.si/teme/strokovni-izpit-za-strokovne-delavce-v-vzgoji-in-izobrazevanju/>

pedagogical/andragogical education programmes, which prepare them for working in education. All programmes have 60 ECTS points ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The educational programmes for teachers at faculties are organised in two different ways (Jeznik in Skubic Ermenc 2019):

- (a) pedagogical streams are organised either as an integrated single-cycle course, comprising 300 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit points; or
- (b) as a consecutive structure of study with bachelor's and master's qualifications, in which pedagogical specialisation can be provided at bachelor and master level.

Teachers of technical and practical subjects in vocational education acquire the initial knowledge of the subject mostly at faculties and partially also at vocational colleges. In cases where these faculties do not provide a pedagogical stream (or pedagogical module), their graduates need to complete a supplementary pedagogical and andragogical course to obtain a teaching qualification. These further study programmes are accredited as study programmes for upskilling. They are usually provided by both the Faculties of Arts and Education in Ljubljana, comprising up to 60 ECTS credit points ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Notwithstanding the differences in organisational structure and - to some extent - in the studies' content, all the above-mentioned teachers, must complete a five-year study, which requires 300 ECTS credit points.

3.4. Requirements for continuous professional development

CPD of VET teachers is understood as a right and as a duty of each teacher. It is specified by the Rules on the selection and co-funding of further education and training programmes for educational professionals (*Pravilnik o izboru in sofinanciranju programov nadaljnjega izobraževanja in usposabljanja strokovnih delavcev v vzgoji in izobraževanju, 2017 and 2020*) ⁽¹⁶⁾ and the Collective Agreement for the Education Sector in the Republic of Slovenia ⁽¹⁷⁾. The collective agreement specifies the right of education staff to up to 5 days of in-service training

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.gov.si teme/ustrznost-izobrazbe-strokovnih-delavcev/>

⁽¹⁵⁾ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-working-early-childhood-and-school-education-73_sl

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV13060>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=KOLP19>

per year or 15 days over three years. Teachers, in principle, choose various programmes by themselves or together with the school management ⁽¹⁸⁾. School management selects CPD programmes on the basis of the development priorities of the schools.

The teachers and schools can choose programmes on education market or Catalogue of further education and training programmes (KATIS).

KATIS is a catalogue of CPD programmes set up and maintained by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry opens invitations for in-service training for pedagogical staff and co-finances it. The selected trainings are available on the KATIS website ⁽¹⁹⁾. The main aim is the professional development of teachers, as well as the development of the system as a whole and thereby improving its quality and efficiency. The pedagogical staff choose CPD courses according to their individual preferences in alignment with individual school's annual work plan. Their choice must be confirmed by the school headmaster or director.

Every year the Ministry of Education publishes a list of priorities Identification and selection of priority programmes is carried out by a Programme Council appointed by the Minister responsible for Education. The Programme Council selects priority programmes and proposes them to the minister as appropriate for funding. The published programmes are given points score that participants can use for promotion (see Section 3.1) The Ministry allocates funds to schools to cover the cost of participation. It also pays the providers of priority programmes and compulsory programmes, either in part or in full ⁽²⁰⁾.

The Ministry of Education co-finances various types of programmes intended for further teacher training:

- (a) Higher education study programmes for upskilling are formal programmes that qualify teachers for another position, to teach a new (similar) subject or to teach a subject at a higher level of difficulty. These programmes are provided by higher education institutions, which have prepared and adopted them in accordance with higher education regulations. All providers of prescribed programmes must be accredited. They also include a programme for all who wish to apply for a headmaster position.
- (b) Career development programmes consist of training for the teaching of new elements and new methods of teaching, the use of new developments in ICT,

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://cpi.si/poklicno-izobrazevanje/izobrazevanje-in-usposabljanje-strokovnih-delavcev/>

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/katis/Uvodna.aspx>

⁽²⁰⁾ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-working-early-childhood-and-school-education-73_en

and so on. The programmes cover various competences: pedagogical didactical, subject specific competences, vocational sector specific competences. They include:

- (i) professional training programmes: shorter programmes intended for professional development of an individual or collective;
- (ii) project programmes: financed from European cohesion policy. They are intended for implementation of new pedagogical practices;
- (iii) additional programmes are organised as a fast response to an unforeseeable and unpredictable issue in education. Contents and organisation are determined by the Minister of Education;
- (iv) thematic conferences and other forms of training that take place in study groups, mentor networks or other schools' networks. They are offered by various public and private providers ⁽²¹⁾.

The Ministry of Education has been surveying the realisation and efficiency of the system. It carries out periodic evaluations of the CPD programmes ⁽²²⁾.

3.5. Data on teachers and trainers in school-based settings

The data on continuous pedagogical education is collected by the schools and Ministry of Education for Human resources management purposes (promotion), etc. The data is not publicly accessible and available for research purposes. The number of participants in the KATIS CPD programmes are collected at the Ministry of Education and available upon request. For example, in the 2019/20 school year there were 18 867 participations. Each teacher can participate in more than one programme in a given year, if foreseen by the school's annual work plan.

⁽²¹⁾ <https://www.gov.si/teme/nadaljnje-izobrazevanje-in-usposabljanje-strokovnih-delavcev-v-vzgoji-in-izobrazevanju/>

⁽²²⁾ <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/katis/Uvodna.aspx>

CHAPTER 4. Training professionals in work-based settings

4.1. Definitions

The person responsible for on the job training is called an in-company mentor or just mentor, who is appointed by the employer and may also be the employer himself/herself.

4.2. Legislation

The conditions for in-company mentors are determined by the Vocational Education Act (*Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju*, 2006, 2017 and 2019). A mentor can be a person who has:

- (a) master craftsman, foreman or shop keeper exam (*mojstrski, delovodski in poslovodski izpit*);
- (b) at least technical upper secondary education, three years of work experience from a relevant field and pedagogical/andragogical training specially designed for them;
- (c) if there are not enough mentors in the company fulfilling the above-mentioned conditions, then at least vocational upper secondary education, pedagogical/andragogical training and at least 5 years of work experience from the same profession the learner is training for, will suffice ⁽²³⁾.

The master craftsman exam, which is a condition for taking up the position of a mentor, can be taken by anyone who has obtained upper secondary vocational education in any field and has at least three years of experience in the field in which he/she wants to take the master craftsman exam or has obtained a professional education and has two years of experience or a higher professional education and at least one year of experience in the field in which she/he wishes to take the master craftsman examination (Small Business Act, first adopted in 1994, changes in 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2013) ⁽²⁴⁾. Master craftsman examination is further regulated by the Rules on master craftsman's examinations ⁽²⁵⁾ (*Pravilnik o*

⁽²³⁾ Vocational Education Act: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4325>

⁽²⁴⁾ Small Business Act: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO355>

⁽²⁵⁾ Rules on master craftsman's examinations
<http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV6107>

mojstrskih izpitih, 2004). The foreman and shopkeepers' exams, derived from Master craftsman exam, are now determined by the Rules on examinations for foreman and plant manager ⁽²⁶⁾ (*Pravilnik o delovodskih in poslovodskih izpitih*, 2009).

Pedagogical/ andragogical part training is a part Master craftsman (foreman and shopkeeper) exam.

4.3. Provision for continuous professional development

The chambers are responsible for mentor training, that follows the initial training programme prepared by the CPI in 2016. If a company wishes to get verified (be eligible to accept students for WBL) the employee set to become a mentor must pass this training. In December 2020 the training programme (32 hours) for the in-company mentors was modernised and adopted by the Expert Council for VET. It includes pedagogical/didactic and some transversal competences. The programme has three content units:

- (a) Communication and cooperation of student and mentor;
- (b) How to support a mentor in training implementation?
- (c) How to support a young person in WBL? ⁽²⁷⁾

The Ministry of Education occasionally provides financing for projects in the scope of which the above-mentioned training programme is implemented. One such example was the ESF project "Training mentors 2016-21" (PAUM) coordinated by the Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana (BIC) ⁽²⁸⁾ and School centre Kranj (ŠC Kranj) ⁽²⁹⁾ which offered three day free of charge trainings for student mentors. The training included the implementation of practical training with work or practical education in companies. Through training, mentors gained pedagogical and andragogical skills for working with high school and university students in the workplace. The PAUM programme included learning about the characteristics of adolescence, learning about various forms of communication, planning the learning process in the work environment, learning about the education system in the Republic of Slovenia, ergodidactics and the psychological basis of learning and teaching.

⁽²⁶⁾ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV8607>

⁽²⁷⁾ https://cpi.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PPI_program_mentorji_dec2020_cistopis_final.pdf

⁽²⁸⁾ <https://www.bic-lj.si/>

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://www.sckr.si>

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (GZS) and Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia (OZS) organise occasional meetings and trainings for the CPD of mentors. The schools also organise annual meetings and one day trainings, in addition PTW coordinators offer counselling for mentors. Once or twice a year CPI organizes additional meetings for PTW coordinators and mentors

There are also additional training (CPD) programmes for mentors implemented by either chambers or various MIZŠ financed projects:

- (a) How to prepare a student or apprentice for an interim exam? (*Kako dijake in vajence pripraviti na vmesni preizkus?*): The programmes contain for example procedures of preparation and implementation of the interim exam, as well as the legislation to be followed ⁽³⁰⁾.
- (b) Communication and trust in mentorship (*Komunikacija in zaupanje v mentorskem odnosu*) teaches the mentors about various levels and skill of communication in a mentor relation in the context of practical training ⁽³¹⁾.
- (c) Preparation of an apprenticeship implementation plan (*Priprava načrta izvajanja vajeništva*): The purpose is to prepare the mentors for the cooperation with the PTW coordinator and the methods of cooperation. The programme will also teach mentors how to prepare the learning goals as part of the apprenticeship plan ⁽³²⁾.
- (d) An effective mentor process (*Učinkovit mentorski proces*) will teach mentors about the importance of good mentoring and the role of the mentors for students and apprentices ⁽³³⁾.

4.4. Data on trainers in work-based settings

The data on number of mentors participating in the training is collected individually by both and ŠC Kranj and chambers. From 2016 to 2021 BIC and ŠC Kranj trained 5034 mentors all in all ⁽³⁴⁾.

⁽³⁰⁾ https://cpi.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Kako_dijake_in_vajence_pripraviti_na_vmesni_preizkus.pdf

⁽³¹⁾ https://cpi.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Komunikacija_in_zaupanje_v_mentorskem_odnosu.pdf

⁽³²⁾ https://cpi.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Priprava_nacrta_izvajanja_vajenistva.pdf

⁽³³⁾ https://cpi.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Ucinkovit_mentorski_proces.pdf

⁽³⁴⁾ ŠC Kranj: Mentor Training – report on implemented trainings and results of the report. BIC: Training mentors for implementing practical training according to the educational programmes 2016-21: Final report.

CHAPTER 5. Partnerships between schools and companies

5.1. Examples of practice

We can highlight the Raising the Professional Competencies of Teachers programme from 2016 to 2022 (DPKU). The topic was the implementation and development of a circular employment model, which enabled VET teachers to go to workplaces and thus the acquisition of current knowledge, skills and competences that can contribute to improving the implementation of the pedagogical process, connecting the teaching material in school with current examples from practice. In the schools the teachers were replaced with suitable qualified unemployed persons or experts from the company. (Belasič, Meserko, 2020c).

In the preparation and implementation of the DPKU programme, a lot of attention was focused on the manner, form and upgrade of the training, as well as on the motivation of all directly or indirectly involved individuals and the promotion of activities. The first pilot implementation of the programme was followed by two more tenders, one in 2017 and the second one in 2019 (*ibid.*). Teachers spent two to fourth months at the workplace.

Despite numerous promotional activities, not enough teachers applied to the programme. From the beginning of the programme in 2016 until the summer of 2019, only 53 circular employments with 86 participants were carried out within the framework of two open tenders (*ibid.*). 20% of the target was realised. The first major problem was a lack of suitable individuals to replace the teachers in the schools, among other reasons were lack of time (as teachers are involved in other school activities like projects, etc.) and Matura subjects (as prolonged teacher absence would affect the students' Matura (or Final exam) success

Due to the low turnout, the 3rd open tender was not published. In agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, a decision was made on the early termination of the programme. (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, the findings of both evaluations should be highlighted, which undoubtedly indicate that both the training participants and the companies evaluate the programme positively and want such activities to continue in the future. Appropriate systemic solutions will be needed to encourage teachers to regularly upgrade their expertise throughout their teaching careers (Belasič, Meserko, 2020c).

5.2. Cooperation between VET schools and companies

A formal link between the school and employer is represented by the learning agreement in which the rights and obligations of the school, the student and the employer in work-based learning are determined. The contract specifically mentions the name and education of the mentor and among other elements also the responsibilities and duties of the student and employer ⁽³⁵⁾. The company and the school can also cooperate through the chamber, especially when it comes to challenges.

In order to be eligible for implementing work-based learning, the employers must satisfy a set of conditions (facilities, equipment, etc). The conditions include a suitably qualified employee (see Section 4.2.) who is entrusted the role of a mentor to a student on work-based learning in the company. The chambers are responsible for verifying whether these conditions are met before the company becomes eligible for work-based learning.

According to the Vocational Education Act work-based learning is implemented partly in the schools and partly at an employer. The cooperation between the schools and companies regarding work-based learning is coordinated by a PTW coordinator, which is a systemised job position at school. They take care of the organisation, liaise between the school and company and support work-based learning. School centres and larger schools employ several PTW coordinators (Justinek, 2011). The company mentors communicate with the schools through the PTW coordinators.

5.3. Hybrid teachers and trainers

Slovenia does not have the so-called hybrid teachers – a type of personnel working part-time in a company and part-time as teachers in a vocational school. There was an initiative in this direction in Slovenia, the already presented project DPKU 2016-22 (see Section 5.1).

5.4. Data on cooperation and hybrid teachers

Not available.

⁽³⁵⁾ Vocational Education Act: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4325>

CHAPTER 6. National and EU-funded projects and initiatives

6.1. Digital skills for remote and blended teaching

In the scope of the POKIT ⁽³⁶⁾ project the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (CPI) in cooperation with the National Education Institute analysed VET teachers' knowledge, attitude and use of ICT in designing and implementing digital competencies in VET programmes. A Questionnaire has been sent to all VET schools, and more than 600 replies have been received. Results of this analysis contributed to training of approximately six teachers per school in 12 vocational schools in 2018/19 to help the teachers develop their teaching approaches in developing learners' digital competence.

In response to the health crisis resulting from the Covid-19 epidemic, the EU has put in place certain mechanisms to help member states recover. Slovenia is involved in two related mechanisms. The first one is called Next Generation EU, and the second one is the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) that was adopted on 10 February 2021 and envisages development in the areas of green transition and digital transformation. In the period between 2018 and 2022, Slovenia is taking part in the project of the European Social Fund called "*Strengthening competences of professional workers in the field of managing an innovative educational institution*", which also includes the training of at least 11 436 pedagogical staff in the development of digital competencies. As part of this project, training in the areas of innovative approaches to learning, running a public institution using ICT, development of digital competences and promoting activities in the field of sustainable development are planned ⁽³⁷⁾.

Since November 2020, Slovenia has been involved in the Digital School Awards online platform, part of the European Commission's SELFIE tool, which aims to showcase successful practices between industry and ministries of education, support innovative teaching practices and positively impact students' educational experiences and results. One of the major aims of this project is

⁽³⁶⁾ Aim of the project: Development of pedagogical digital competence of general education subject teachers and teachers of professional modules in VET schools in order to develop digital competencies of students in the scope of digital competencies of citizens (DigComp 2.1).

⁽³⁷⁾ <https://cpi.si/kohezijski-projekti/krepitev-kompetenc-strokovnih-delavcev-na-podrocju-vodenja-inovativnega-vzgojno-izobrazevalnega-zavoda-v-obdobju-od-2018-do-2022/>

helping schools realise, how well – or how little – they use digital technologies in different areas of school work and life: teaching practices, infrastructure, curriculum and helps them realise, how they can improve on them.

Between 2017 and 2020, the SIO 2020 or Slovenian Education Network programme took place, in the framework of which the construction of wireless networks and the purchase of ICT equipment ⁽³⁸⁾ were carried out.

6.2. Green skills for sustainability

Similar to the field of digital competencies, Slovenia is involved in European cohesion projects and European Social Fund projects in the field of green transition, one example being the “*Strengthening competencies of professional workers in the field of managing an innovative educational institution*” project between 2018 and 2022).

6.3. Preventing early leaving from VET

VET schools also employ school counsellors specialised for SEN students. They have a special education degree (special pedagogues).

VET teachers can attend various non-formal programmes (published in the KATIS catalogue and any other programme) in order to gain competencies to better support learners at risk. The National Education Institute offers regular non-formal trainings for all teachers teaching students with all kind of special needs.

The CPI in recent years offer non-formal programmes on topics like early warning system for prevention of drop-out, teaching students with behavioural and emotional difficulties etc. Programmes were developed based on the different projects, e.g. 2014-2017 Erasmus+ project CroCooS ⁽³⁹⁾. Currently CPI cooperates in Erasmus+ project STAIRS, which focuses on increasing inclusion of SEN students and student with lower socio-economic status.

⁽³⁸⁾ <https://www.arnes.si/sio-2020/>

⁽³⁹⁾ <https://cpi.si/mednarodno-sodelovanje/erasmus-plus/crocoos/>

CHAPTER 7. National surveys of teaching and training populations

Since the 2015/2016 school year, quite a few studies and evaluations of the quality of work in vocational and technical schools have been carried out in Slovenia.

The first one is the Evaluation of the Pilot project to promote entrepreneurship and self-initiative among young people in 2015/2016 (Mažgon, Janez, Ravbar, 2015), which was a project aimed at improving the employment opportunities of young people. Next came the theoretical study called Planning and implementation of educational individualisation in vocational and technical education programmes (Mažgon et al., 2015), serving as the basis for the later activity of introducing individualisation in secondary vocational and technical education.

In 2018, the evaluation of circular employments took place within the framework of the 1st open tender of the Raising the professional competences of teachers programme in 2016 and 2017 (Belasić, Meserko, 2020a). The evaluation was intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of training in companies, the communication between parties and the final effects of the programme as such on all participants. The target group of the 1st open tender were teachers or pedagogical staff in the field of vocational education. An evaluation report named Companies welcome apprenticeship (Klarič et al., 2019) was issued in the same year, which presents a new practical training approach for students involved in vocational and technical education programmes. As part of the evaluation report, four more sector-specific reports on interviews with all involved parties were prepared:

- (a) report on interviews with employers (Klarič, Jeznik, Mažgon, 2018);
- (b) report on interviews with schools (Klarič, Jeznik, Mažgon, 2018);
- (c) report on interviews with the commerce chambers (Klarič, Stolnik, 2018) (There are two chambers of commerce in Slovenia - the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia);
- (d) report on apprenticeship surveys for students (Klarič, Štirn, Mažgon, 2018).

In 2018/19, three reports were published in the field of vocational and technical education. The first one was the evaluation report on the implementation of the 2nd open tender for the participation of secondary vocational and technical schools in the Raising the professional competences of teachers programme between 2017 and 2019 (Belasić and Meserko, 2020b). The second one is a report on the results of an empirical study in pilot schools as part of the MIND+ project,

Individualisation in secondary vocational education programmes (Mažgon (ed.), 2020). It is a project co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Social Fund, and its purpose is the development of school practice, which considers the didactic principle of individualization and enables optimal development for each student. The final report is an interim evaluation report on the experimental implementation of apprenticeships titled Evaluation challenges in apprenticeships (Klarič, 2020). The report also includes sector-specific annexes on interviews with employers regarding monitoring and evaluation (Jeznik, Klarič, 2019), surveying school representatives on monitoring and evaluation (Resnik, Stolnik, 2019), interviews with employers about interim tests (Štirn, Klarič, 2019a), report on the analysis of interim test reports (Štirn, Klarič, 2019b), partial evaluation report on the surveying of interim test supervisors (Štirn, Klarič, 2019c) and the report on interviews with the chambers regarding interim tests.

In 2019/20, two reports were issued. An evaluation report on the implementation of WBL in the 2019/20 school year (Štirn, Klarič, 2019d) on the implementation of practical training with work in educational programmes in vocational and professional education. And secondly, the final evaluation report titled *Raising the professional competences of teachers between 2016 and 2022* (Belasić, Meserko (eds), 2020c), which highlights the importance of continuous vocational and professional education of teachers as well as presents the programmes and examples of good practice of teacher education and training.

CHAPTER 8. Conclusions

Discussions on the further development of vocational and technical education are directed in accordance with the findings arising from the presented strategic changes in the field and the findings that follow the introduction of innovations into practice itself. A special challenge is the creation of appropriate systemic starting points for changes in the education system, that will allow for a better continuation of educational practices that have been altered as a consequence of health and other longer-lasting social and environmental crises. Slovenia has not yet developed appropriate systemic solutions in this area.

By participating in various national and international projects, the regulation of the vocational and technical education system is constantly coordinated with numerous European networks and research, and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training as a national competent institution in this field is making an important contribution by focusing on planning, introduction and evaluation of various project and system innovations and solutions.

Quality of education and catering to needs of students is a priority in the Slovenian education system. This is proven by systematic changes in the areas of individualisation of educational processes, as well as changes in the area of apprenticeship and training.

List of abbreviations

CPD	Continuing professional development
DPKU	Raising the Professional Competences of Teachers
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ISCED	International standard Classification of education
IVET	Initial education and training
PAUM	Pedagogical-andragogical training
PUM-O	Project learning for young adults
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning

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