

Skills anticipation in the Slovak Republic

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Table of contents



Summary

Overview of the Slovakian approach

Description

Aims

Legal framework

Governance

The role of stakeholders

Target groups

Funding and resources

Methods and tools

Skills assessments

Skills forecasts

Skills foresight

Other skills anticipation practices

Dissemination and use

Use of skills anticipation in policy

Target groups' uses of skills anticipation outputs

Summary

Despite a clearly expressed political commitment to develop one, there is no coherent set of skills anticipation activities for producing and interpreting skills intelligence in Slovakia. While there are a number of innovative and complex forecasting tools, their scope remains limited. Because of that, the role of stakeholder engagement and local/regional dialogue between policy-makers, employers and education and training providers are of key importance.

The regulation of skills anticipation activities includes laws on the public employment services, general and vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. The recently developed [National System of Occupations](#) (*Národná Sústava Povolani*) and [National Qualifications System](#) (*Národnej sústavy kvalifikáci*) – along with the inter-institutional sectoral VET councils are also relevant here. All these national-level regulations are framed by the [National Employment Strategy of the Slovak Republic \(2014-2020\)](#), which creates the link between national and European policies.

Most existing skills anticipation initiatives have been developed under the auspices of the [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#) (*Ministerstvo Práce, Sociálnych Vecí a Rodiny Slovenskej Republiky, MPSVR*), with the [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#) (*Ústredie Práce, Sociálnych Vecí a Rodiny, COLSAF*) taking the lead. The [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport](#) (*Ministerstvo Školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej republiky*) is another key player coordinating policymaking, especially with regard to VET and higher education. At the sub-national level, self-governing regional authorities lead the dialogue with other stakeholders.

While most skills intelligence is targeted at policymakers, some initiatives target young people who are embarking on their vocational education courses (and their parents) by offering information about their future labour market opportunities. There seems to be no budget specifically dedicated to skills anticipation in Slovakia and a great deal of the resources spent on generating skills intelligence have been provided by the European Social Fund (ESF). Although anticipation activities exist, the lack of a coordinated approach has not supported the link between the skills intelligence gathered and policymaking. The impact of skills anticipation-oriented research on policies remains weak.

Overview of the Slovakian approach

Skills anticipation in Slovakia

Key actors

Governance	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF)	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport	Government Council for Vocational Education and Training	
Stakeholders	Sectoral VET councils	Social partners	National Lifelong Learning Institute	Self-governing regions	
Target groups	Policy makers	Employers	Regional employment services	VET providers (public and private)	Students/ young people

Types of skills anticipation

Quantitative forecasting	Econometric model developed by the Institute of Economic Research at the Slovak Academy of Sciences	Forecasting model developed by TREXIMA	COLSAF - skills anticipation at regional level
Skills assessments	National Lifelong Learning Institute - Monitoring and forecasting of educational needs		
Foresight	Ad-hoc exercises		
Other	Vacancy and employers surveys	Higher education graduates tracking based on administrative data	

Dissemination

Channels	Project related	Synthesing websites - Labour market	Project related
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Channels	websites	Labour market information systems	conferences
Use	Not monitored		

Description

The skills anticipation process in Slovakia is still in development and remains fragmented. Most activities, such as the collection of administrative data and surveys of employers, aim to establish current and predicted skills demands. There are also developments in new forecasting tools, inspired by the CEDEFOP methodology and supported by European Union funding (namely the ESF). But on the whole, linkages between existing skills intelligence exercises remain underdeveloped.

Aims

In Slovakia, the primary aim of skills anticipation activities is to inform policy-making on employment, to harmonise VET, and to provide information to employers at national and regional levels.

Legal framework

The National Employment Strategy of the Slovak Republic to 2020 (2014) outlines the two overarching aims regarding skills anticipation:

- 'provide sufficiently qualified labour in all sectors of the national economy'
- 'ensure that the education system is responsive to the needs and requirements of employers'.

The *Act on Employment Services* (No.5/2004) orders COLSAF and regional labour offices to analyse and forecast labour market developments and to publish them on their website (starting in 2013). (1) To date, only sporadic outputs are provided and made publicly available at a local level.

The *Act on Vocational Education and Training* (No. 184/2009) stipulates that professional associations should cooperate with COLSAF in the preparation of analyses and forecasts of labour market developments. Vocational education and employment-oriented training are coordinated at the national and regional levels.

Other relevant legislation includes:

- The *Education Act* (2008);
- The *Act on Teaching Staff and Vocational Training* employees (No. 317/2009), which covers the issue of vocational and careers guidance of students;
- The *Act on Higher Education* (No. 131/2002), which foresees the obligation to provide career counselling services to students in higher education.

The National System of Occupations (NSO) and the related National Qualifications System (NQS), completed in 2015, are two elements of the legal framework relating to skills and skills forecasting in Slovakia. The NSO hosts a job registry which provides information on employers' job needs (e.g. required skills and qualifications). These two elements were funded by ESF grants.

Governance

COLSAF is responsible for the public employment service: it implements national labour policy via the regional and local labour, social affairs and family offices (2) (hereafter: labour offices). Self-governing regional authorities are responsible for secondary schools, including VET-oriented secondary schools, mainly with respect to the planning of educational provision.

The role of stakeholders

Given the lack of a formal, coherent system of skills anticipation in Slovakia, cooperation between employers and VET providers and/or the regional authorities responsible for VET institutions is important.

Employers and Government representatives were brought together to create sectoral VET councils as part of the 2009 *Act on Vocational Education and Training*. Their role was to undertake sectoral skills anticipation activities, but they ceased exist in 2013. The responsibility for skills anticipation was then given to COLSAF, the regional labour offices, and the sector councils newly created within the emerging NSO.

There is consensus amongst stakeholders that the education and training needs to meet labour market demands. Twenty-four new sectoral VET councils were created by mid-2015 by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and employer representatives. They include key stakeholders (including MPSVR, employer representatives and an expert from the State Institute of Vocational Education) responsible for the definition of occupational standards, the preparation of sectoral analyses, skills needs surveys and prognoses. The main driving force in adapting the VET offer to skills needs of employers is the private business sector, in particular, representatives of the automotive industry.

High-level bodies relevant for skills anticipation include the following:

- Social partners (representatives of employers and employees), who are represented in the Economic and Social Council, a consultative body of the Slovak Government and social partners at the national level. The social partners comment on issues of economic and social life, including employment, and on draft strategic and conceptual documents, policies and legislation. The formal nature of the Council may stifle debate about issues relating to employment, skills, etc.
- The Government Council for Vocational Education and Training, an advisory body to the Slovak Government on vocational education and training, also includes representatives of employers' associations.

Social partners are not consulted regularly concerning the demand for the foreign labour force and the impacts of labour migration on the national labour market, since no such mechanism has been in place

in Slovakia. The social partners are only involved on an ad-hoc basis, for example, as part of projects or in the preparation of legislation and policies.

Overall, the coordination of activities between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and MPSVR appears to be crucial as these two institutions oversee all ESF co-financed skills anticipation projects.

Target groups

The main intended target groups of skills anticipation exercises are:

- Policymakers (in the fields of employment and education);
- Public employment services;
- Regional self-governing authorities that oversee VET secondary schools;
- VET providers;
- Students/young people.

Funding and resources

There seems to be no budget specifically dedicated to skills anticipation exercises and no information is available on the exact expenditure on skills anticipation in Slovakia.

The established skills anticipation exercises (described in Section 2.3), conducted by the public employment services, are funded by the Government. The development of new skills anticipation instruments are funded from ESF grants and/or the national budget.

Resources flowing into building the skills anticipation system are not sufficiently coordinated, with various autonomous projects being implemented by different public institutions.

Methods and tools

Slovakia does not have a coherent system of skills anticipation. Although there are plans for developing the necessary instruments for coherent skills anticipation activities, progress has been slow and rather fragmented.

Skills assessments

A project run by the [National Lifelong Learning Institute](#) (*Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania*, NUCZV) aims to create and implement a monitoring and forecasting system of educational needs for lifelong learning and career guidance. The plans include:

- Conducting a periodic survey of employers regarding vacancies;
- Monitoring expected job openings;
- Understanding qualification requirements by sector and region.

NUCZV's obligation to develop a monitoring and forecasting system of educational needs (as a subordinate organisation to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport) is stipulated in the *Act on Lifelong Learning* (No. 568/2009). The forecasts are expected to support career guidance and promote lifelong learning courses. This ESF-supported project was operational in the period 2013-2015. The final report was published in Slovak on the [NUCZV website](#). Results are provided only for selected occupations for which NUCZV has developed [modular educational programmes](#). Despite the original goal, or the obligation imposed by the *Act on Lifelong Learning*, a forecasting element is still missing in this initiative. Nevertheless, it can be considered as a detailed skills assessment in a particular segment of the labour market that contains an outlook on future developments.

Skills forecasts

In Slovakia, macroeconomic models are not routinely used for skill needs forecasts. Since 2010, the [Institute of Economic Research of the Slovak Academy of Sciences](#) (IER SAVBA) started a comprehensive forecasting exercise on labour market demand up to 2025. (3) A model based on the CEDEFOP methodology was devised and, in 2014, data on the anticipated labour supply and demand up to 2025 were presented disaggregated by sectors, occupations and educational attainment. Since 2014, yearly updates resulting from methodological improvements which include regional-level analysis have been published. The results are used by academic and research institutions in the education sector. A continuation of these forecasting activities is planned until 2018. These efforts are financed from the national budget.

COLSAF, in collaboration with private sector companies Trexima Bratislava and Deloitte, began to develop a labour market forecasting tool which used a complex skills anticipation methodology. However, there are no plans to continue or to develop the project any further.

COLSAF launched the ESF-funded project [Forecasting labour market developments](#) (in 2014) and commissioned Trexima Bratislava to develop a comprehensive skills anticipation system with a view to promote a better match between the provision of secondary level VET courses and training programmes with labour market demand. Partial forecasts of occupational shortages have been discussed in meetings of the National VET Council. Unfortunately, there is uncertainty about the organisational and financial sustainability of the newly developed forecasting system after the end of the ESF grant period. (4)

Skills foresight

There are ad hoc foresight analyses and pilot studies conducted at European Union level, in particular by CEDEFOP; however, none of these exercises take place at national-level.

Other skills anticipation practices

Labour shortages in Slovakia are identified on the basis of administrative data and employer surveys:

- The *Quarterly Work Reports*, published by the Statistical Office of the SR, report the number of

- vacancies by industrial sector and geography.
- The *Quarterly Report on Jobs in Small Enterprises and in Entrepreneurs* reports the number of (unfilled) vacancies by industrial sectors, jobs and geography. These reports are based on surveying a sample of 10,500 SMEs/entrepreneurs (see an example at Slovak Business Agency 2014).
 - Sectoral reports include data on vacancies according to the classification of employment major groups. The reports are based on a survey of companies employing 20 or more employees. (5)

In 2009–2012, COLSAF and its partners Trexima Bratislava and Deloitte conducted a series of quarterly employer surveys (6) on anticipated skills shortages and qualification requirements for occupations.

An initiative to link higher education to labour market needs was the ESF-funded national project *Universities as engines of the development of a knowledge society* (2013-2015), which was coordinated by the [Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information](#) (SCSTI). The project aimed to assess the effectiveness of courses with regard to meeting labour market needs by tracking labour market outcomes of university graduates using administrative data. A forecast of supply and demand for high-skilled labour until 2023 is available at the online portal known as [Lepsieskoly](#).

Dissemination and use

As the production of skills intelligence in Slovakia is ad hoc and fragmented, it is difficult to assess how the results of the skills anticipation exercises described above are disseminated and used. In addition, the reliability and relevance of the available skills intelligence are limited. (7)

Websites of particular projects present the dominant dissemination channel for the results of all these initiatives.

Use of skills anticipation in policy

The skills anticipation outputs are utilised by central and regional governments, education providers, social partners, and the academic and research community. The [Educational Policy Institute](#) (*Inštitút vzdelávacej politiky*, IVP) established by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the [State Vocational Education Institute](#) (SIOV) are involved in the adjustment of secondary VET programmes to findings of skills anticipation exercises. IVP's mission is to provide ad hoc analyses, as well as forecasts and participate in the preparation of educational policy. The results of the skills anticipation activities are not actively disseminated.

Instruments and tools for identifying labour market shortages are currently used for determining active labour market policy and influencing VET policy. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport with MPSVR, professional associations and trade unions, update and publish a list of fields of study and fields of education with a shortage of graduates in the labour market on an annual basis.

Labour market forecasts (prepared by COLSAF and Trexima within the ESF-funded project forecasting labour market developments) have been used to support decisions of regional and local authorities,

which maintain secondary level VET schools to assess the number of places offered on courses. The information is planned to be taken into account when making decisions on the central Government funding of secondary vocational schools from the school year 2015/2016.

Target groups' uses of skills anticipation outputs

Skills forecasts are used in vocational and career guidance to the extent that they are available and relevant for the services provided. The use of skills intelligence does not appear to be a key element of career guidance services.

Information about vacancies, training opportunities, the registry of occupations and qualifications is available to the wider public online on the portal [Internet Guide to the Labour Market](#) (*Internetový sprievodca trhom práce, ISTP*).

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Available at http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/analytical_highlights/skills-anticipation-slovak-republic

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Endnotes

(1) Regional labour offices are publishing documents on regional priorities for supporting employment in their region (Regional Employment Plans). These are being published in a non-systematic way, without a centralised repository for this type of analyses and only for selected regions. Moreover, the information included is not analytical - mainly only descriptive statistics on the general situation in the local labour market, provision of ALMP, and general priorities for future delivery of employment services in the region. See MPSVR (2016) for an example document in Slovak.

(2) In relation to one of the active labour market programs (ALMP) provided by COLSAF, supporting job seekers in the labour market, implemented under §46 of the Act on Employment services, regional labour offices are obliged to prepare an assessment of skill needs in their region. These assessment reports are used in creating the portfolio of training courses provided under this particular ALMP. Assessment reports are not public; they are circulated only within COLSAF.

(3) ISTP. n.d.b.

(4) MSVPR. n.d.c.

(5) For examples of sectoral reports go to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic:

https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/products/publikacie/!ut/p/b1/jY_LDolwFEQ_qYMtD5cXo6WGNLZSxG5MF8ZgBFwYv18kbbXvbpJzZnKZZw3zfXi2l_Bohz7c3tknJzLG7Mu6hqwXGygeSWjngCoZgeMI4MsRIt-kKsvziIBou4aaaCftVkOO8cefAf7aX0kaRFoCWSliiKCacXRrOOfvXf2B-OuYalmDmRVOM3ZndO-

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(6) MPSVR. n.d.b.

(7) Vantuch & Jelinkova. 2014.

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