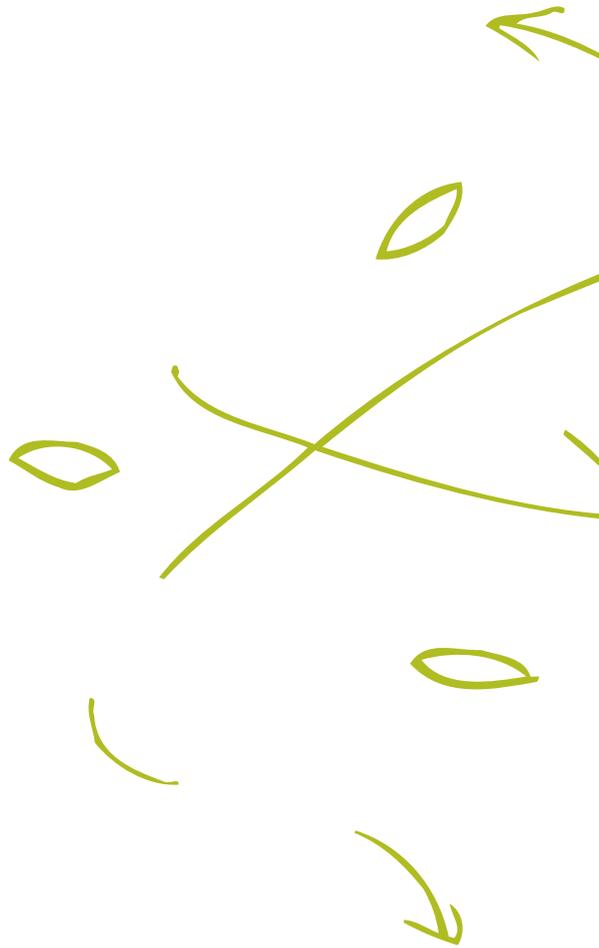


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National Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Development of a Common European VET Area

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Who and what is the National Institute
for Vocational Education and Training

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is the central development and advisory institution for VET in Slovenia. The basic tasks of the Institute include creation of professional bases and methodology platforms, competence-based occupational standards, development of contemporary modular educational programmes and other activities leading to increased quality of VET and integration of education and work sphere.

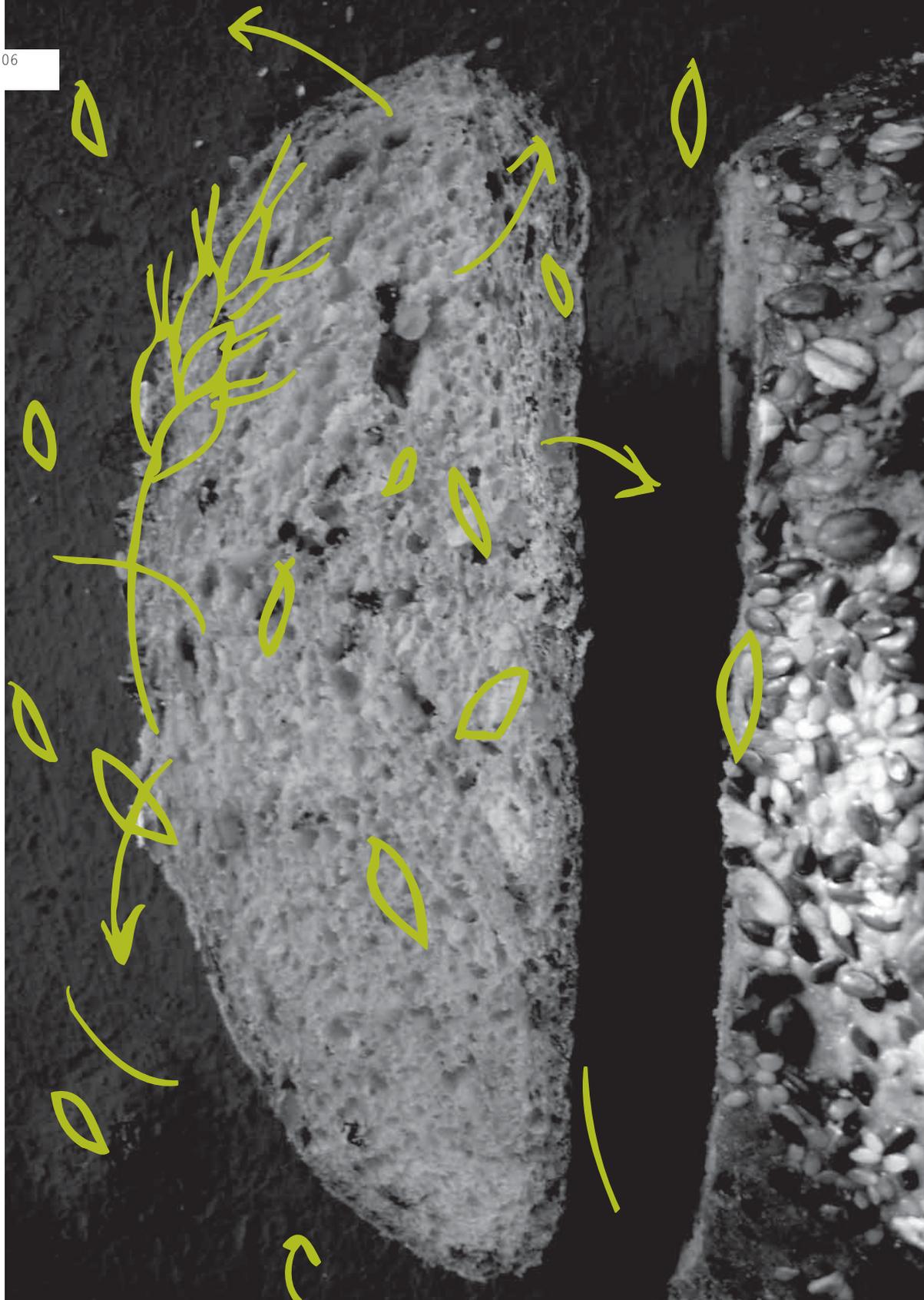
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1. Introduction

1.1. National Institute for Vocational Education and Training as Partner in the Development of a Common European VET Area

> >> Metka Zevnik

The roots of contemporary Slovene vocational education and training (hereinafter referred to as VET) reforms can be traced as far back as a decade ago. 1996 saw the adoption of the amended education and schooling legislation which also covered VET. The evaluation performed during the Phare MOCCA project in 2000 proved that the reforms were adequate only over a short transition period. The need **for greater flexibility, deregulation and decentralization** emerged, which in turn called for radical changes in organization, planning and implementation of the VET system.

In 2001, the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education approved amendments to the Guidelines for Elaboration of Educational Programmes in VET, the abbreviated name of the document being the **Guidelines**. The document introduced important changes in the VET system, with particular focus being on the promotion of elaboration of new educational programmes conforming to European development policies pursued by Slovenia.

Having adopted the Guidelines, we faced the question of how to successfully implement these changes into practice and how to conceive a path leading from the idea to implementation in the classroom. We were fully aware of the fact that we cannot simply impose certain ideas on schools and expect them to put in place these changes alone. What is more, we knew that the success of reforms is equally proportional to systematic professional support, adequate system mechanisms and involvement of pilot schools in development. The Education Office within the Ministry of Education and Sport took over the coordination of interdepartmental task, i.e. elaboration of the Development Programme for the Implementation of the Guidelines in 2002. The basic idea behind the development programme was to come up with updated guidelines at the level making it possible to launch trial implementation and evaluation at pilot schools, followed by the introduction of an appropriately designed concept into the extended school practice. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training played a central role in the elaboration and implementation of this document.

The Development Programme proceeded from the following assumption: an in-depth knowledge of (academic) data or skills was no longer at the heart of the education and schooling process, but the focus is on the development of competences in every individual, thereby enabling him/her to respond adequately, to make decisions in personal and professional life and to be oriented towards sustainable development. Lifelong learning is regarded as necessity as it is linked to employability in many areas. Hence, it constitutes a prerequisite for maintaining a job.

The Development Programme set out components of new and modern programmes comparable in Europe and based on occupational standards of interest. The basic structural novelty of the programme lies in the modular structure incorporating general, professional and practical knowledge as well as providing for transparent links between formal and non-formal systems for the recognition of qualifications. An important emphasis was placed on integration of general, professional and practical knowledge, while the prominent novelty included the elaboration of guidelines for the planning of the open curriculum amounting to 20% of contents within a learning programme. This concept opened an opportunity for the school to forge links with its work environment and consequently meet its regional needs. In the light of support measures for changes paving the way to decentralization, a proposal for a different model for financing of VET vocational and professional schools was created. The plan for training the trainers was drafted in order to provide for high-quality introduction of reformed programmes. Simultaneously, the project laying down foundations and guidelines for dropout prevention and for mitigation of its consequences was conceived as well. The first trial programme started at four pilot schools in 2004.

In parallel to the abovementioned process in Slovenia, which was at the time an EU accession country, the EU charted its course towards the objectives 2010. The Lisbon Strategy was

launched with the strategic objective of making Europe the most dynamic and knowledge based economy in the world. The Education and Training Work Programme 2010 (approved in 2002) rests on three headings:

Improve the quality of education and training systems; facilitate the access of all to the education system and open up the system to the wider world. The Copenhagen Declaration (2002) addressed development objectives in relation to VET. It set out the expansion of the European dimension, increased transparency, identification of links between competences and qualifications, and lent support to quality assurance. Furthermore, the Maastricht Communiqué (2004) laid down priorities at national level by linking them to the European dimension – translating the Copenhagen objectives and tools into practice, raising investment in VET, drawing from European funds, taking into account the needs of risk groups, developing flexible and individualised learning paths, extending partnership, identifying needs for the real professional knowledge, developing and upgrading teacher competence and the learning environment, assisting in competence development and pinpointing learning needs in VET teachers, setting up the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET). In 2004, Slovenia became a full member of the EU and has since then been eligible to capitalize on the European Structural Funds. National and European funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) opened up the possibility to continue the reform of all VET educational programmes and projects, and in doing so translating into practice European recommendations in the financial period 2004-2006. The project is extremely extensive in scope, thus the work has been divided between the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training and three school consortiums.

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is the driving force behind occupational standards as it formulated the development concept and methodology for programmes, knowledge assessment and education completion, as well as elaborating a part of new programmes. At the same time, it is also in charge of trial introduction, teacher training and evaluation of novelties. The Europass Centre and the National Observatory linked with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) also fall within the remit of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training. What is more, the Institute is actively involved in the implementation of guidelines put forward in the Helsinki Communiqué, such as raising the image and attractiveness of VET and implementation of the credit system.

Development solutions incorporating European policies became mandatory as the amended Vocational Education and Training Act was adopted by the National Assembly in 2006.

The work of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is gaining in intensity by training the teacher staff who will be involved in putting into effect new concepts of educational programmes in the school year 2007/2008. This endeavour opens up the door to greater professional autonomy and consequently also responsibility.

As it is the case in any development path, our path was also fraught with dilemmas, questions and searches. All issues have not yet been closed and resolved as the new ones keep emerging from the development vision set out by the EU, demographic and employment forecasts as well

as globalization. However, the process constantly produces new quality – teamwork in search for best solutions by bringing together experts from the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs, National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, National Education Institute, teachers, headmasters and foreign experts. We jointly combined forces and endeavoured to come up with solutions in schools, companies and chambers. Staff members from different schools got acquainted with each other and drew closer. Many new professional and personal ties were forged and they will be cultivated in the next years as we support schools in the introduction of programme novelties.

1.2. Brief Excursion into Contemporary History of Slovene VET

> >> Klara Skubic Ermenc, PhD

The VET system in Slovenia was conducted exclusively at schools (school-based) during socialist times in the former Yugoslavia and was linked to the centrally-planned economy. The system was financed entirely by the state, which also planned its scope, determined the programme and provided conditions for its implementation. Following Slovenia's independence, our country opted for the market economy, with the education sector launching the reform of the whole education system.

Late 70-ies saw the setting up of the so-called career-oriented education at a level of higher secondary education in the state. The model introduced a special model of a common secondary school deriving from two general principles: (1) to enable the entire population to obtain a common basis for further education, personal growth and higher cultural standard, and (2) to direct students towards work or towards appropriate branch of education. (Common ...1979). This was an advanced model in terms of its principles; however, its implementation was plagued with many problems giving rise to its abolition. The model was criticised for making the so-called "common basis in career-oriented education" too demanding for the entire population of secondary school students resulting in poor school performance and dropout. The model was also disapproved for not preparing students sufficiently for the entry into the labour market. The reform process did not include employers, while teachers were not trained to take up the work in the new system.

Having considered and reflected on the experience accumulated from career-oriented education, a conceptual design for a new VET system in Slovenia came to life in 1992. The concept was published in the Proceedings System Regulation of VET (ed. Medveš, Muršak, 1992). The Proceedings reflected research efforts and debates held at the end of the 80-ies and beginning of 90-ies in which a large number of experts from various fields participated. The concept elaborated in the document modelled on the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia and also on the Vocational Education and Training Act (1996).

1.3 Basic Principles behind the Development of VET in a New State

> >> Klara Skubic Ermenc, PhD

A new concept for the development of VET system rested on the following basic principles (Medveš, Muršak, 1992).

- > >> **Gradual transformation of the system:** The basic premise was that the system could not be changed overnight as the change in quality can only be achieved when the changes are internalized and creatively shaped by all stakeholders, especially teachers, and if the reform is founded on research and comparative studies. We endeavoured as much as possible to also faithfully follow this principle in the second wave of the post-independence reform after 2001.
- > >> **Social partnership:** The economy is extremely interested in attracting high-quality employees; therefore it is essential to incorporate the sector as an active partner in the development of education. We cannot even begin to imagine VET in the market economy without the participation, responsibility and investment of owners of the capital.
- > >> **Basic VET for all:** The system has to be conceived in such a way as to enable every young person to complete VET. We cannot allow for young people to drop out of the system without obtaining a qualification of any kind. Thus, it is our obligation to elaborate programmes at various levels of complexity and to promote adult education.
- > >> **Development of alternative paths:** People have to be given an opportunity to obtain the same profession by taking different paths, depending on their interests and life situation.
- > >> **Compatibility with European systems:** This principle has to be translated into practice due to mobility and improved quality of the system.
- > >> **Elaborating programmes in line with the content of qualifications and needs of the vocational field:** Educational programmes have to follow educational and system requirements as well as taking into account requirements stemming from occupational qualifications of tangible occupational profiles.
- > >> **Setting up a complete VET vertical:** Each occupational field has to develop a complete educational vertical, including both post-secondary and tertiary levels.
- > >> **Transferability between vocational and general education:** The structure of the education system has to enable actual horizontal and vertical transferability.

1.4 Basic Characteristics of Secondary VET System

> >> Klara Skubic Ermenc, PhD

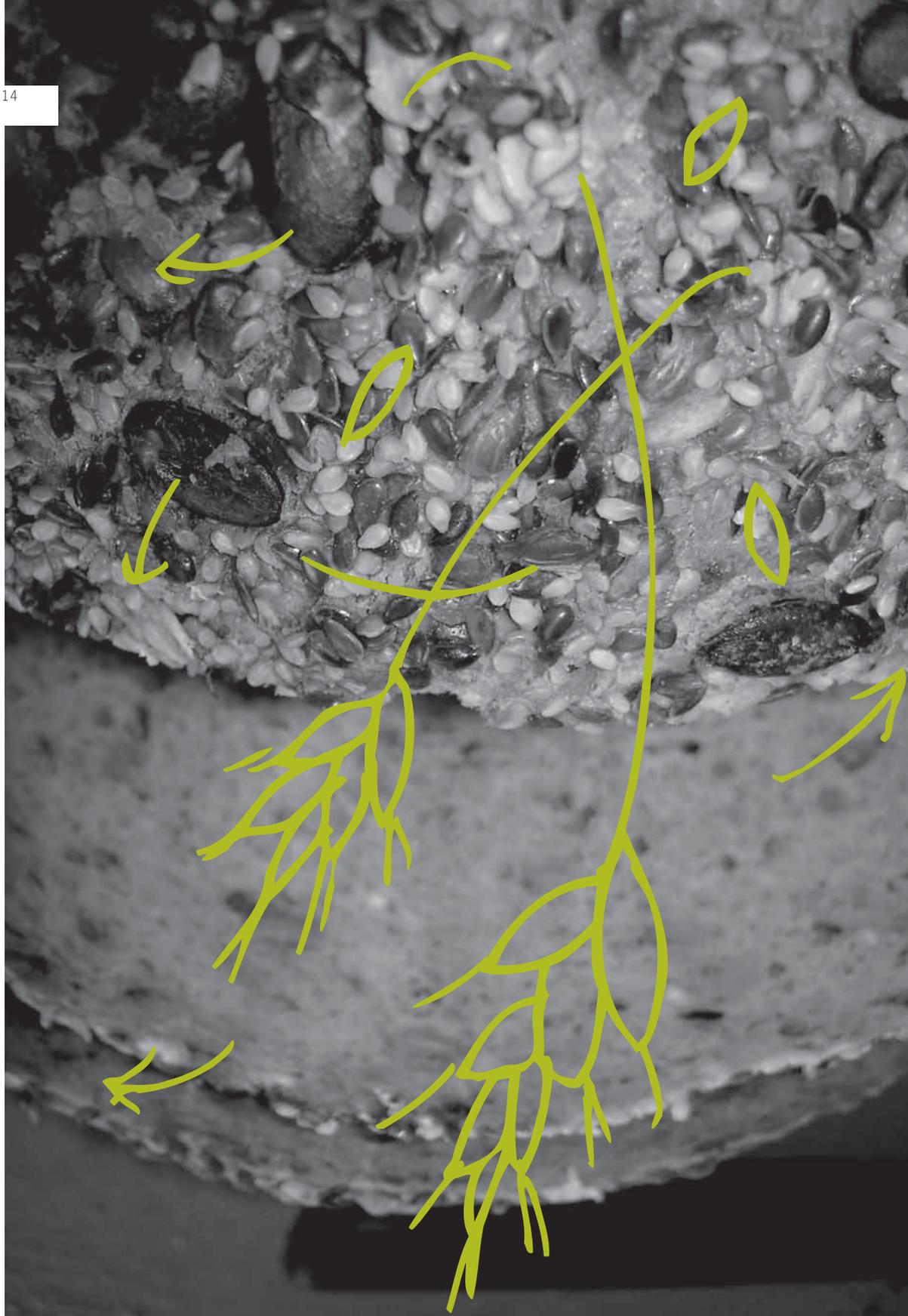
The aforementioned principles formed a basis for the development of the system which has maintained the same global structure as laid down in the legislation approved in 1996. The introductory section aims to provide a brief presentation of the system (see also a system diagram) so that the readers would obtain a better insight into the functioning of our Institute. The Slovene system of secondary (initial) VET is characterised by three types of educational programmes.

- > >> **Lower VET programmes** lead to the occupation at the level of an assistant or ancillary staff, and take two years to complete. The programme annually receives approximately two percent of the young population, out of which the majority comes from the ranks of those who failed to successfully complete primary school programmes, or from special schools. Consequently, these programmes have a more pronounced orientation towards socialization and general education. A student who successfully finishes the programme is eligible to matriculate into the first year of a secondary vocational programme.
- > >> **Three-year secondary VET programmes** train students to take on occupations at the level of skilled workers, craft and service sector. At the same time, these programmes have a pronounced general education component as the graduates are in the position to register into an additional two-year vocational and technical education programmes. This programme is already at the level of technical/professional education, therefore it finishes with the vocational matura (final examination). The matura enables students to be trained in the occupation at the level of a technician, while at the same time also provides for the unlimited matriculation into vocational college and higher education programmes, while the registration to some university programmes is also an option under certain conditions. This is the so-called 3 + 2 system representing the alternative to the technical learning path described in the following paragraph. This system serves an important function as it strengthens vertical and horizontal transferability.
- > >> **Four-year secondary technical or professional education** programmes conclude with the vocational matura. Contrary to VET programmes, professional contents are at the heart of the programme, while there is less emphasis on professional practice. Despite this difference, education obtained in a 3 + 2 system and technical or professional programmes is equal in status.
- > >> **The matura course** is a one-year training programme accepting applicants who successfully finished a secondary vocational or professional programme, or a third year of the grammar school and interrupted education for at least a year, or successfully finished a primary school programme and passed the examination equal to the level of a third year of the grammar school. The matura course provides for planned and systematic preparation for the general matura.

To conclude, none of these educational paths could be regarded as a dead end, which would also contravene the idea of lifelong learning. Horizontal transferability is formally provided, for and all vocational and professional learning paths also lead to the tertiary level of education¹. The system was conceived in such a way as to enable progression at the point of successfully completed educational programmes at individual levels of education without additional barriers standing in the way of progression. This is made possible by the structure of the system, as well as by the system of education programming, which fundamentally proceeds in a way to draft programmes for all types of educational programmes in one area at the same time. These principles – as next paragraphs will reveal – are also coupled with the design of occupational standards laying down foundations for the elaboration of programmes. They are seen as a contract offered by the economy in terms of scope, depth and content of occupational qualifications which programmes have to bear in mind. In this way, we put in place the principles of cooperation between social partners in programming and consider labour market needs.

The period after 1996 and most notably since 2001, has been characterised by an increased participation of Slovenia, as well as the Institute, in European integration projects and processes, which will be extensively corroborated in the next contributions.

¹ In addition to the development of secondary VET, past years have also witnessed an intensive progress in post-secondary programmes, whereby the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training participates in the development of vocational college education programmes (short cycle programmes classified as 5B programmes under ISCED), i.e. vocational programmes preparing the applicants to occupy complex professions at the level of an engineer.



2. Role of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training in VET Reform in Slovenia

2.1. Development Activity and Its Starting Points

> >> Slava Pevec Grm, MSc

The development of VET in Slovenia has been marked by a visible appearance of the area at the international arena since the mid 90-ies of the previous century. Following from the results of development work and evaluation conducted within Phare projects, the consolidation of VET was given a further impetus by the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on enhanced cooperation in VET in Europe, which was signed by Slovenia as well. As of 2002, development activities in VET have been in full swing.

VET in Slovenia is being developed by bearing in mind national objectives and our distinctive features, at the same time also incorporating objectives, principles and instruments approved at the European level.

Reinforcing transparency, i.e. visibility, comparability and transferability of vocational qualifications and competences, recognising non-formal and informal learning and competences, raising quality, attractiveness and flexibility, conceiving the national qualifications and the model for credit system in VET and strengthening lifelong learning by also engaging in intensified counselling at all levels and creating a possibility for individuals to build on his/her learning achievements and have them recognised as they transfer between educational programmes, levels and systems. All these principles are subject to systematic inclusion into our VET system.

The key guiding principle in further reform steps stems from the fact that Slovenia is a small country with a population of two million; therefore it is of utmost importance that VET rests on the principles of excellence and solidarity. The system should be conceived in such a way as to enable all, both the young and adults, to develop their strong points and obtain knowledge and skills at the level of excellence. Each individual should be stimulated to attain the highest possible level of knowledge and competence, while simultaneously also enabling weak students to obtain an occupation by lending them professional and training support.

The new Vocational Education and Training Act (2006) sets out legal framework for the implementation of the following strategic objectives:

- > >> improving **flexibility and response** of VET by drafting **modularly based and open structure educational programmes subject to credit assessment** so as to provide for a quick response to new labour market needs, while the adults should have a possibility to obtain national vocational qualifications and education in parts;
- > >> learning results and education standards merit a clear definition by taking the form of adopted **vocational and key competences**, i.e. competence to act responsibly, efficiently, successfully and ethically in **complex, unpredictable and changing** circumstances in professional, personal and public life. Training participants have to acquire vocational and key competences in order to cope with most comprehensive and complex work tasks in individual vocational fields in which they receive training;
- > >> **integrating general, professional and practical knowledge** into coherent and problem based educational programmes, catalogues of knowledge and examination catalogues. The objective is to bring about better internal and content links and intertwinement of knowledge, develop vocational and key competences opening the door to the comprehensive competence for the occupation, ability to cooperate in society, promote personal development and further training. The objective is to develop all three dimensions of VET: train for employability, personal development and participation in society;
- > >> raising the necessary **quality** of VET by putting in place a comprehensive approach to quality assurance at national and school level (establishing quality assurance groups at every school and performing self-evaluation);
- > >> **lowering dropout rates** by adopting targeted measures (increased individualization and support to individuals in training);
- > >> improving the recognition of **non-formal learning** and integrating the school and certification system in the context of lifelong learning and the national qualifications framework;
- > >> elaborating framework educational programmes at national level and transferring a

part of decisions in curricular design at school level (syllabus with allocation of hours, open curriculum, implementation models) in order to enhance an autonomous and development role of schools;

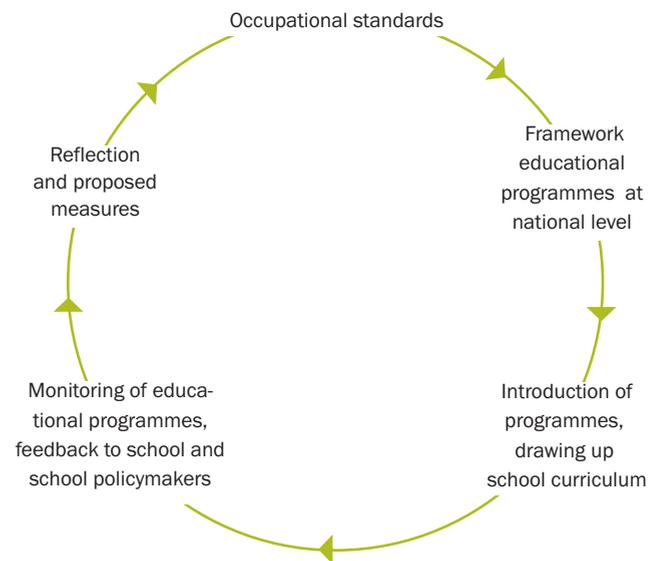
- > >> promoting schools to come up with **new methodical and didactic solutions**, most notably increased individualization of instruction and stepping up teamwork of all participating teachers. Schools are encouraged to develop their own didactic and methodological knowledge so that they would more competently respond to the diverse population entering VET institutions;
- > >> reinforcing links between **research, learning practice and school policies**, improving the relevance of educational programmes and new qualifications leading to **attractive and new occupations** in environment protection, tourism, information science, communication, insurance business and other services.

These objectives are translated into practice by a widespread curricular reform in all professional fields. Ever since its inception, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training has also assumed a development role which has been reinforced further by capitalizing on the funds from the European Social Fund. Throughout this period, we launched development projects to support basic activities of the organisation, while at the same time also taking the lead in some processes at national level. Our standing at national level was additionally boosted through our intensive international cooperation through international projects (see the Chapter on International Cooperation), visits abroad, study visits and visits by foreign lecturers. The funds from the ESF enabled the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training to step up its development activities, lay down adequate expert grounds, develop concepts and methodologies to realise the objectives set.

The most important objectives undoubtedly include a comprehensive approach and methodology to draw up new competence based and modularly structured VET educational programmes. The comprehensive approach incorporates all phases:

- > >> design of occupational standards for the entire area;
- > >> elaborating framework educational programmes at national level;
- > >> systematic introduction of new educational programmes, drafting the implementing curriculum and training school teams; new methods of knowledge testing and assessment, simultaneous evaluation and reflection;
- > >> monitoring the introduction of educational programmes and giving feedback to schools and school policymakers.

Phases in drawing up competence based and modularly structured educational programmes



An important result of our development work is the publication entitled Curriculum at National and School Level in VET (2006). The booklet presents a number of methodologies and describes strategies employed by the planners of national and open curriculum as well as teachers in elaborating school curricula. The publication *Elaborating the School Curriculum – Two Examples of Good Practice* was also conceived in order to make it easier for schools to draft the school curriculum.

Having considered European guidelines and national debates, we have also put in place the model of credit system in secondary VET.

We are managing the project pursuing the objective of setting up the Slovene qualifications framework and we are also leading members in national groups dealing with quality identification and assurance in VET.

We published the publication on the introduction of enterprise in VET and on development of enterprise traits of the young in VET (*Introducing Enterprise Education in VET*).

We are also examining the links between theory and practice, and one of the most tangible results of our work is the publication of the booklet entitled *Integrating Practical Training in School and at Workplace*.

Special needs students also fall within the remit of our development activities. Expert grounds were formulated with the view to draw up high-quality adapted educational programmes.

Our efforts also centre on increasing integration between the certification and school system, or abolition of some barriers which are still being perceived in this area (coordination of documentation and methodology for its preparation).

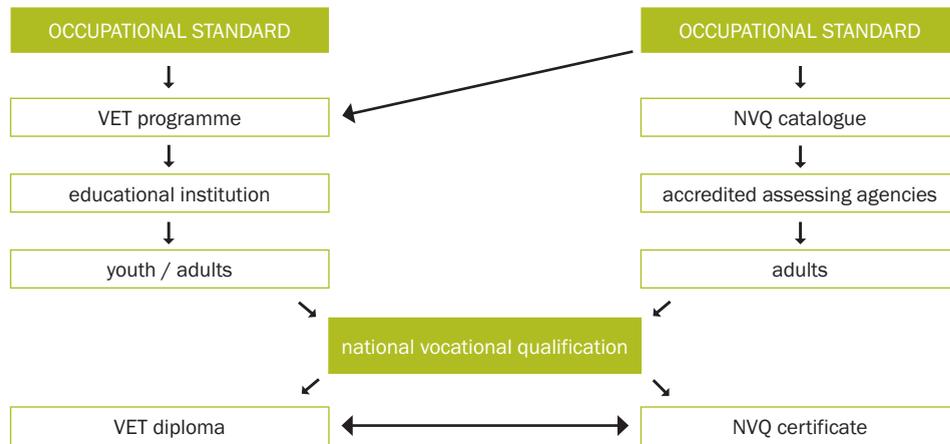
Our development efforts take us more and more in the area of the learning process as we are broadening the scope of our knowledge and stepping up the intensity of cooperation with schools in planning the learning process, implementation and assessment of achievements, high-quality implementation and assessment of achievements, development of self-evaluation of schools and teachers, creation of the inclusive learning environment and some other areas.

2.2. Development of Occupational Standards

> >> Urška Marentič

An increased pace of the development in the economy, primarily in new technologies and services, gives rise to the development of new vocational qualifications, which in turn calls for new national occupational standards, as well as development of qualifications in new occupational fields. The introduction of new occupational standards steps up the adaptability of the education system responding by modularization and development of educational programmes to meet real employment needs.

When developing occupational standards in Slovenia, we also consider basic European documents (common European objectives in European education and training systems by 2010, Copenhagen Declaration and Maastricht Communiqué). The Maastricht Communiqué is especially significant in relation to occupational standards as it sets out the objective of providing for transparency, quality and creating mutual trust to facilitate the setting up of a genuine and regulated European labour market. The principle of transparency is considered as the basic principle in the development of occupational standards serving as the basis for both educational programmes as well as for catalogues for acquiring national vocational qualifications in the certification system. Consequently, occupational standards are a unifying link between VET and the certification system of national vocational qualifications. In other words, we are setting up the uniform system of national vocational qualifications.



The principle of transparency is the guiding force in the methodology for the development of occupational standards which lay down simple records and transparency of documents. The methodology for the development of occupational standards is published in the brochure and in this way made available to all interested partners participating in the development of occupational standards. Comparable documents from EU Member States are also considered in the development of occupational standards, which also contributes to mobility and employability at national and European labour market.

The procedures for the development of occupational standards systematically involve all key partners at national level as the contents of occupations and qualifications are defined, their levels of complexity are determined and labour market needs in the following years are set. The participation of most advanced actors in industry, craft and services is of particular relevance in order to identify the need for new qualifications at an early stage.

In the period from 2001 to 2006, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training cooperated with social partners and developed 351 occupational standards in different professional fields.

Graph 1: Developed occupational standards (2001-2006)



The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training put in place first occupational standards for glass industry in 2001. In 2002, the process continued to include individual occupational standards in press, computer science, construction and security. The number of developed occupational standards further increased to 73 occupational standards in 2003 and covered the following fields: restoration, car repair sector, tourism, welding, car mechatronics, construction engineering, mechanical engineering and agriculture.

A comprehensive approach was introduced in the development of occupational standards in 2004 so that the qualification structure and occupational standards were developed for the entire professional field in line with the development strategy of the business. Thus, 2004 saw the development of occupational standards in design, food technology, forestry, horticulture, woodworking, metallurgy, catering, while the following fields were covered in 2005: pharmaceutical sector, stone-cutting, mechanical engineering and transport.

The need for the development of an increased number of occupational standards emerged in 2006, especially due to the reform of educational programmes financed from the funds of the European Social Fund. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training developed

occupational standards in these fields: audiovisual technology and multimedia production, transport, business and administration, health care and social services. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training participated with the representatives from secondary school consortiums to develop occupational standards in the enumerated fields: agriculture, horticulture, forestry, food technology, electrical engineering, energy, electronics, telecommunication, mining and environment protection. 2006 witnessed the development of a large number of occupational standards in the military field as our Institute joined forces with the general staff of the Slovene military in the project. 2007 will mark the completion of work for occupational standards in dental care, optics, veterinary science, chemistry and training of childcare workers.

2.3 Development of VET programmes

2.3.1 Development of Secondary VET between 1996 and 2006

- > >> Slava Pevec Grm, MSc
- > >> Klara Skubic Ermenc, PhD

The introductory chapter briefly outlined the starting points for the development of VET in the independent Slovenia. Following from these starting points, the Vocational Education and Training Act was adopted in 1996 which triggered enormous development of VET programmes. At the end of the 90-ies, Slovenia performed numerous evaluations of the results achieved until that period (they were mostly conducted in the framework of the international project Phare Mocca). Evaluations alerted us to some deficiencies of the reform that had been pursued so far. Too many weak links between theoretical and practical learning were highlighted as the particularly burning issue. In order to overcome these barriers, a new conceptual material mentioned in the introduction was published in 2001, i.e. the Guidelines for Elaboration of Educational Programmes in Lower and Secondary VET (hereinafter referred to as the "Guidelines").

The Guidelines marked the second wave of VET reform in Slovenia which was in full swing in 2004, primarily due to the support from the European Social Fund. The process reached its peak in 2006 as the new Vocational Education and Training Act was passed.

Having designed occupational standards, our country aims to respond to economic, technological and social changes, new forms of work organisation and the use of IT in professional life. In addition to the abovementioned factors, the principle of lifelong learning and learning for life in a globalised and multicultural society confronting a number of environmental challenges and challenges arising from sustainable development is taken into account when educational programmes are drawn up. This process models on the reformed Guidelines, describes strategic orientation of VET in the state, and above all introduces a new concept for the elaboration of VET educational programmes.

From then, we have been introducing modularly structured programmes with credit points and

a bigger share of elective contents. In this way, we have responded to the call for increased flexibility and responsiveness of VET. In parallel, we have been stepping up our efforts to open up possibilities for adults to acquire national vocational qualifications (certification system) and education in parts.

The modular approach gradually puts an end to subject-based structure of programmes with the view to reinforce the links between general, professional and practical knowledge. The links are also visible in the drafting of the catalogue of knowledge whereby authors attempt to formulate training objectives by bringing together vocational and key competences (interdisciplinarity and integration of general knowledge into vocational).

2.3.2 Concept for Planning of VET programmes

Competences

Based on the Guidelines, the funds from the European Social Fund made it possible for us to elaborate a new concept of curricular planning. Competences are defined as developing and demonstrated abilities of individuals which enable them to act creatively, efficiently and ethically in complex, unforeseeable and changed circumstances in professional, social and private life.

The development of competences involves:

- > >> acquisition of theoretical, conceptual and abstract knowledge (using theories, concepts, professional knowledge); cognitive perspective;
- > >> developing skills, expertise and procedural knowledge (ability to solve problems in different life and work situations); functional perspective;
- > >> developing an autonomous and ethical stance towards other people, community and the environment, evolution of responsibility, autonomy; socialization perspective.

The new concept sets forth definitions for three types of competences.

- > >> **Generic competences:** Abilities enabling an individual to obtain a comprehensive and systemic insight into key characteristics and problems in a specific occupational field. Generic competences and identified professional theoretical knowledge constituting the basis for common modules in the entire field or even more fields.
- > >> **Occupation specific competences:** Combine professional theory, practical knowledge and requisite general knowledge in the context of work and business processes, and bear in mind the needs of clients. Technological, economic, environmental and health elements are considered. Logically connected vocational competences are integrated into content units, and content complexes are incorporated into modules. The ultimate objective is to formulate such modules to provide for gradual upgrading of professional competence.

tence in a learner. We want to overcome fragmentation by subjects and to provide for the greatest possible integration of various types of knowledge.

- > >> **Key competences:** The important objective pursued by VET is to upgrade general knowledge contributing to the development of key competences and successful cooperation in society, personal development and further training.

Secondary VET develops the following key competences:

1. ability to communicate in mother tongue and foreign language,
2. mathematical competence,
3. learning to learn,
4. intercultural competence,
5. aesthetic competence,
6. social science and natural science competence,
7. social competence,
8. IT literacy,
9. health protection and care for wellbeing,
10. entrepreneurship.

General knowledge contents are included in educational programmes in various ways:

- a) as the basic standard of general education in lower and secondary VET programmes in a special section of the syllabus;
- b) as underlying knowledge in the professional section of the programme: in cooperation with the National Education Institute, we perform the analysis of requisite general knowledge serving as the basis for accumulating high-quality professional knowledge. The knowledge is included in an adequate professional module in the form of a content complex;
- c) key competences, such as learning to learn, social competencies, entrepreneurship, IT literacy, health and environment protection, sustainable development and interculturality are incorporated into all subjects and modules in educational programmes;
- d) additional range of general knowledge which the school can include in a general curriculum in line with interests of employers or students;

Modules

Competences combine into modules. Modules were defined as programme units in lower and secondary VET educational programmes. The module represents a complete unit of objectives and contents bringing together professional, theoretical, practical and general knowledge. Individual modules (or several modules) lead to the acquisition of a national vocational qualification on the basis of occupational standards which serve as a basis for educational programmes and conform to provisions governing the field.

Based on the analysis of occupational programmes, educational programme designers set the modules which an individual has to complete in order to obtain a certain vocational or professional title:

- > >> **(common) basic modules** comprising basic professional and theoretical knowledge and generic competences in a certain field (food technology, mechanical engineering);
- > >> **mandatory elective modules** are determined on the basis of elective criteria and the number of modules an individual has to choose to satisfy minimum criteria for obtaining a vocational or professional qualification. In other words, an individual is operationally qualified to perform two or more occupational standards;
- > >> **optionally elective modules** are offered by schools in the open curriculum and can also entail new qualifications from a different programme or even field (fast food cook, brewer module).

One of the key decisions to be taken when elaborating programmes is how to determine the ratio between mandatory and elective modules. In this process, we attempt to find answers to the question of what constitutes basic knowledge and competences in a professional field, and how many elective modules an individual has to select to satisfy minimum criteria for being awarded a vocational or professional title.

Elective modules train for specific competences laid down in occupational standards and for additional competences foreseen in the open curriculum. They provide for increased flexibility of educational programmes (schools make a specific offer) and electiveness (students select offered modules in accordance with their interests).

Open Curriculum

The national level in Slovenia is responsible for only 80 % of professional and vocational part of the curriculum (general education part remains at 100 %). The remaining 20 % is labelled as the open curriculum which is determined by the school in cooperation with social partners at local level. In this way, we wanted to contribute to the responsiveness of programmes and meet local needs of the market. Thus, schools are also given an opportunity to respond to the needs of their students, either to their career interests or to provide for conditions to successfully pursue a further learning path.

Reform Fields

This principle is taken into account when elaborating programmes in numerous fields:

- > >> textile and garments,
- > >> design and photography,
- > >> chemistry and glass industry,
- > >> optics,
- > >> printing and multimedia,

- > >> transport and logistics,
- > >> beauty care,
- > >> hairdressing,
- > >> economy, business, trade and decoration,
- > >> health care, dental care, pharmaceutical industry and laboratory medicine,
- > >> partly in mechatronics, computer science, woodworking and catering.

2.4 Introduction of New Educational Programmes

- > >> Saša Grašič
- > >> Darko Mali

The introduction of new educational programmes is linked to the pilot introduction and monitoring of the educational programme car mechatronic. New reformed programmes and new schools are being incorporated in the project every year. As many as 18 new programmes at 65 schools will be implemented in September 2007, whereby individual schools already perform a number of new programmes. In other words, 99 programme teacher assemblies have so far been trained in the introduction of new programmes.

The programme teacher assembly represents a team at individual school which autonomously and following professional discussions takes professional and organisation decisions for the work with students in a new programme. These actions have a profound impact on the development and quality of the school. In addition to the tasks pertaining to curricular planning, the programme teacher assembly also undertakes necessary steps in organization and monitoring of the implementation.

The school curriculum is the biggest novelty in the process of introduction of new programmes at all schools. It constitutes a process and development document of the school whose external boundaries are represented by legislation and national educational programmes, while expert judgement is the only internally limiting factor. The school curriculum should be seen as the planning level coming between the superior national level and subordinate level, i.e. teacher level. It consists of two basic elements: pedagogical and didactic concept of the school and annual preparations of the educational process. (Pevac et al., 2006, p. 51-53). Hence, the school curriculum creates an opportunity and obligation for teachers to raise their professional autonomy, which translates into greater freedom in decision-making, more responsibility, a bigger need to professionally substantiate decisions, a new and different system of values, as well as new and more democratic relations within the school and towards the outside world.

These new conditions and expectations for teachers and schools were the source of the onset of new training needs for teachers, counsellors and on-the-job mentors, as well as co-workers in professional institutions (such as National Education Institute and National Institute for Vocational Education and Training). Our response was to compile professional materials (e.g.: Pevac et al.: Curriculum at National and School Level, National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana, May 2006), organise training and counselling; regularly monitor introduction and implementation of new programmes. More than 500 training sessions for

teachers, counsellors and mentors in companies were conducted with help from European and budgetary funds in the period from January 2004 to July 2007. Training was intertwined with other forms of discussions, e.g. working group meetings, meetings with headmasters and conferences. We continuously monitored the development of reforms at schools, considered its effects and impacts and published these findings in reports (www.cpi.si/spremljava). The findings from monitoring served as a basis for further amendment and focus of our work with schools and at schools.

When conducting training with the school staff, we pursue the objective of instigating changes in curricular planning, didactical approaches and organization culture. We try to raise awareness with every team of teachers by communicating the message that they should proceed from their involvement in a wider social environment when planning and implementing their pedagogical tasks. Also, in addition to guidelines set out in national educational programmes and profession, they should primarily bear in mind the needs of students, labour market, employers, local environment and broader society. They are being encouraged to reflect opinions of their co-workers, management and recommendations of support institutions, such as the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, National Education Institute, faculties, craft and commerce associations and ministries when taking and substantiating their professional decisions.

The following competences are at the heart of our work with teachers:

- > >> ability to cooperate, interact and engage in teamwork,
- > >> ability for project and development work,
- > >> ability for lifelong learning,
- > >> creating the environment conducive to learning for individuals and groups,
- > >> ICT literacy,
- > >> ability to manage school administration,
- > >> positive bias towards development and progress, taking care for one's own wellbeing and personal development.

Evaluation questionnaires are integrated into all teacher seminars and workshops, which enable us to simultaneously follow the results. Generally speaking, training sessions have been viewed as a very positive experience, with teachers primarily highlighting the impact of motivation to effect changes in their work. The presentation of real-life examples and work methods has emerged as an extremely welcome form of training. In 2007, training sessions have been intense and numerous as a large number of new programmes have been introduced. To fulfil the wishes voiced by teachers this year, other teachers who developed interesting examples of good practice in the past three years were also invited to attend many of these seminars. Their presentations were accompanied by lively exchanges of experience.

Preliminary evaluation results in relation to the introduction of new programmes in 2007 reveal that teachers were very pleased with the presentation of good solutions from other schools. Some teachers, however, still point to the problem of more comprehensive understanding of reform objectives, indicate the need to obtain additional knowledge in development of active

learning methods and project work; assessment of vocational competences and assessment in general and objective and problem oriented curricular planning. Teachers express the need to produce additional support guidelines and learning material helping them to conduct teaching in line with modern curricular theories. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training has already capitalized on this feedback by planning further educational and project activities for teachers and in cooperation with them.

2.5 Monitoring of New and Reformed Educational Programmes

- > >> Tina Klarič
- > >> Katja Jeznik

The monitoring of VET educational programmes is defined as the procedure for systematic collection of information on condition and implementation of educational programmes. The basic objective of monitoring is to detect the implementation of VET objectives, identify the examples of good practice developed by schools in fulfilment of training objectives and pinpoint barriers standing in the ways of a high-quality educational process.

To raise the quality of monitoring, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training has put a participatory and educational approach at the forefront since 2005 as monitoring was supported by the European Social Fund (ESS). When designing monitoring instruments, we already took into consideration basic premises and objectives of the field subject to monitoring with the view to also use monitoring results for counselling and guiding of schools when meeting the objectives in individual fields of educational programmes. In the past, monitoring primarily centred on the snapshot of the situation and implementation of educational programmes at individual schools. The support from the European Social Fund made it possible to actively involve school representatives and other external experts and experts for individual education fields. We jointly plan and perform monitoring in the fields where novelties are put in place in line with the philosophy of the VET reform. Results of cooperation between school participants, experts and the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training took the form of guidelines for individual areas of the pedagogical process, assessed examples of (good) practice and completed reports on monitoring which are annually represented at competent professional councils. Some reports are also printed as publications.

The purpose of monitoring is to respond to the needs of the professional public at two key levels:

- > >> **school level:** Monitoring helps individual schools and school professional teams to gain an insight into their own quality in comparison with events at a broader and system level, and events taking place at the level of more schools;
- > >> **system level:** Finding and monitoring proposals are brought to the attention of stakeholders in the form of reports at competent professional councils and consequently the

ministry. Reports represent the basis for co-shaping of guidelines for further development of VET and are intended for professional teams and expert groups responsible for elaboration and introduction of new and reformed educational programmes, or for development of new and modern pedagogical concepts

In the light of the abovementioned circumstances, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training employs a descriptive methodology in monitoring, while primarily striving for the intertwining of a formative and development perspective:

- > >> **formative perspective of monitoring:** Formative monitoring identifies the actual state of affairs at VET schools (benefits and possible problems) in the introduction and implementation of educational programmes. The basic objective of this type of monitoring is to lend support to schools and teaching personnel in order to improve the educational process;
- > >> **development perspective of monitoring:** The basic objective when performing this type of monitoring is to check understanding and implementation of new concepts which are in our case brought about by the VET reform.

Monitoring in the period from 2005 to 2007 covered a number of more extensive fields. Next sections present some interesting findings. As every monitoring complex is placed in the monitoring context, we will primarily point out the monitoring function and the basic message of monitoring (results are made available to the public in compiled reports and publications):

1. General Insight into VET Reform

This process deals with a formative perspective of monitoring. The introduction of conceptual novelties in teaching practice primarily depends on acceptance, understanding and putting in place novelties by teaching practitioners. Identification of views in relation to basic novelties, problems in introduction, additional educational need for high-quality implementation etc. which are covered by monitoring aims to familiarize school principals, teachers, professional collaborators of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training and competent professional bodies and civil society with the course of the VET reform. For the sake of illustration, a participative perspective in monitoring was put into effect in this segment through evaluation meetings at schools where we met with programme teacher assemblies to discuss the areas which should be incorporated in monitoring.

Monitoring results indicate that teachers are on principal favourably disposed towards conceptual novelties introduced by the reform (team planning of the educational process, integration of theory and practice, school curriculum). As the reform of educational programmes is the trigger for radical changes, one can be sympathetic towards critical voices among teachers who indicate that additional training and knowledge is required for high-quality work so that learning results in small classes would be better and that better material and organisation conditions would be created...

Against this backdrop, monitoring results provide feedback to principals, teachers and other teaching practitioners, as well as reveal their views about the reform and insight into their own quality in comparison with the events at a broader and system level, and events taking place at the level of more schools.

2. Contribution to the Elaboration of Professional Guidelines in Curricular Planning – School Curriculum

One of the basic new features of reformed educational programmes is their open structure and orientation towards targets, development and process. When putting in place such educational programmes, the success also greatly depends on high-quality planning of the educational process. Hence, new programmes were coupled with the new concept of the school curriculum. It presupposes intersubject integration and in turn promotes teamwork of teachers, especially in planning of the educational process. We performed evaluations of school curricula, thereby making it possible for schools and the expert group developing the concept of the school curriculum to obtain an in-depth insight into the achievement in the area. Based on evaluations, we also planned additional professional training, both for teacher practitioners at VET schools introducing new and reformed educational programmes, as well as for professional co-workers from the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training which assist schools in the introduction of novelties.

Evaluation results show that schools are making a paradigmatic shift towards targeted planning of the educational process. Also, it is evident that knowledge and mostly also practical training objectives are being integrated; schools strive to find adequate solutions for allocating school contents and objectives throughout the school year and for their mutual integration... All these achievements of schools reflect teamwork of teachers at schools. Teamwork was introduced as an important novelty in the Slovene education system. Teachers also mention positive effects of this concept promoted by new educational programmes. Teacher-centeredness was perceived as a remaining weak point of the system. Identified examples of good practice and weak points can be seen as basic premises for further development of the school curriculum and education planning.

3. Practical Training

An increased amount of time in new and reformed programmes is allocated to practical training with the employer, which calls for closer links between schools and employers. In parallel, practical training is gaining in relevance also due to the already mentioned opening up of the national curriculum at local level. Monitoring in this area examined possible ways to promote high-quality relations between schools and employers, and determined levels of responsibility among individual partners. Thus, monitoring involved all stakeholders, i.e. representatives of employers, schools and students.

Monitoring results reveal that the majority of students (more than 90%) are satisfied or partially satisfied with practical training with employers.

Table 1: Level of satisfaction with practical training

Assess practical training with the employer. You are:	Number	Percentage
satisfied	118	74,7
partially satisfied	28	17,7
unsatisfied	12	7,6
Total	158	100,0
Unanswered	11	
Total	169	

Source: Jeznik, K., Gale, Š., Šibanc, M. (2006). Poročilo o spremljanju praktičnega izobraževanja – analiza in interpretacija vprašalnika za dijake, <http://www.cpi.si/files/userfiles/Datoteke/kurikulum/Spremljava07/Priloga%20%C4%8C.pdf>.

Students most often equate satisfaction with good relations, favourable work environment, as well as new and different learning situations they come across in practical training. Material goods and possible employment are ranked lower.

An important finding emerged during monitoring and this is very important for further development of the area: mentors with employers, teachers and organisers express their willingness for training. The interest of mentors was not stated across the board, therefore schools are promoted to organise mentor training. There is also a need for more intensive training for teachers and practical training organisers.

2.6 Comprehensive System of Quality Identification and Assurance in VET

- > >> Slava Pevec Grm, MSc
- > >> Darko Mali

One of the key objectives pursued by the VET reform in Slovenia is to raise quality.

The new Vocational Education and Training Act (Official. Gazzete, 79/2006) lays down a new framework for the functioning and development of the VET system in Slovenia. On the one hand, the legislator reinforced the autonomy and development role of schools; while on the other hand, it reinforced the significance of quality identification and assurance at level of providers and at national level. The Act highlights the significance of the comprehensive system of quality management taking into consideration the Common European Framework on Quality Assurance in VET. This framework represents the basis for quality indicators determined by competent professional bodies, and each school will (if it still failed to do so until now) establish a quality assurance group. The Act also sets out the relevance of a common system for quality determination and assurance in VET conducted by a public institution or other organisations set up with the view to develop VET.

2.6.1 Quality Assurance in VET at National Level

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is involved in national activities in relation to quality. We are a partner in the setting up of the national system and school self-evaluation model. Both concepts are briefly described below.

The concept of quality is not absolute because it reflects objectives, values, available resources and the context of different stakeholders in VET (students, social partners, providers and state).

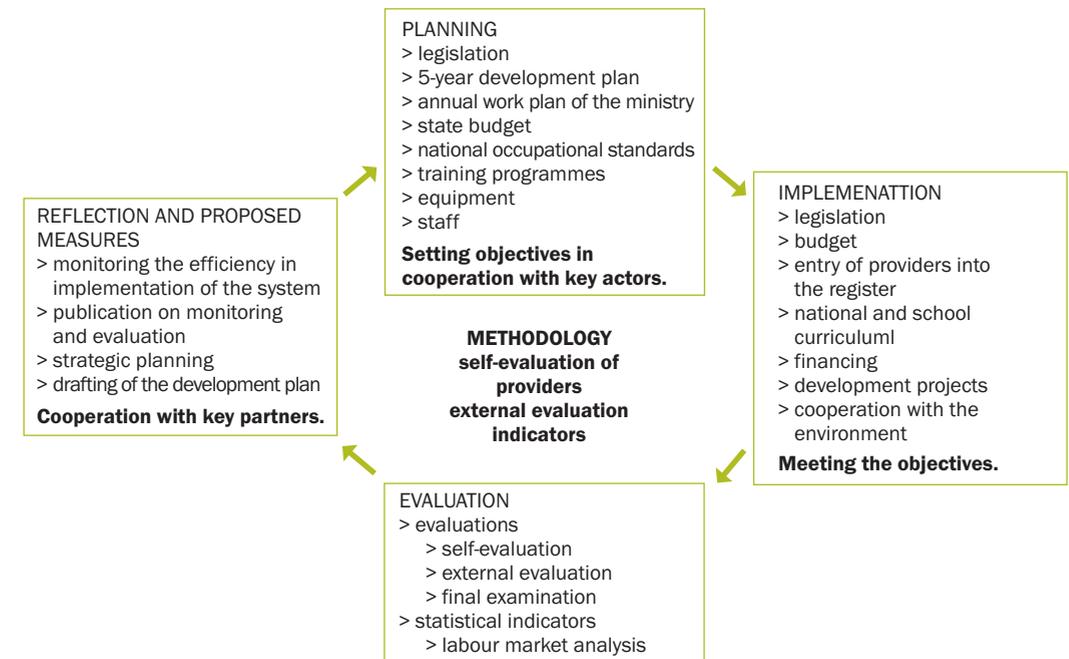
Slovenia traditionally provided for quality through different mechanisms regulated by laws and bylaws.

Basic elements (guidelines) behind quality assurance are:

- > >> inclusion of social partners in all planning phases and implementation of VET (design of occupational standards and educational programmes; implementation, open curriculum);
- > >> national educational programmes defined as learning results (vocational competences and general knowledge) and forming a basis for the school/implementing curriculum; broad basic knowledge and gradual electiveness;
- > >> entry of providers into the register;
- > >> defined level of education for teachers;
- > >> introduction of new educational programmes, elaboration of the school/implementing curriculum and training of teacher programme assemblies;
- > >> monitoring of the introduction of educational programmes and cooperation in external evaluations;
- > >> final examination of knowledge and acquired competences (final examination, vocational matura);
- > >> new method of financing should promote providers to engage in long-term and objective-oriented development work.

The Common European Framework for Quality Assurance in VET points out constant improvements on the basis of the Deming circle (planning, implementation, evaluation, feedback and proposed measures), both at the system level as well as on the level of every provider. This approach has also been embraced in Slovenia. The diagram shows how the Deming circle was utilised in our country.

Overview of national guidance (management) in VET:



- a) meeting the training objectives** (involvement in VET, successfully completed education, participation in further training/transferability);
- b) responsiveness of the VET system to new challenges in relation to knowledge** (matching supply and demand, employability, open curriculum);
- c) development of quality assurance systems in educational institutions**
- d) development and improvement of material and HRM conditions in VET** (investment in teacher training, material conditions)
- e) opening up the learning environment and promoting lifelong learning**
- f) reinforcing accessibility of VET for specific groups** (improved programme offer, methodical and didactic innovations).

2.6.2 Self-Evaluation as the Method for Quality Identification and Assurance in VET at Level of Providers

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training accumulated and upgraded knowledge in quality assurance in education in cooperation with partners within Leonardo da Vinci projects (QUTE – quality in VET, QualiVET, quality development and assurance in VET in the field of mechanical engineering). We are currently putting in place a model in cooperation with partner schools. Their guiding principles are briefly explained in the next section.

Providers assure quality by adhering to principles of a comprehensive quality management system which also considers the common European Framework for Quality Assurance in VET. The European framework provides a simple, yet efficient framework for introducing continuous improvements. The model supports planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement of basic and support processes performed by providers of educational programmes. The model recommends self-evaluation as the basic method for quality identification and assurance of schools. It can comprise one, more or all factors influencing the quality in VET. Self-evaluation helps schools in analysing their activities and providing suitable feedback in the areas requiring changes.

Recommendations for schools were designed at national level with the view to facilitate self-evaluation in the defined areas:

1. School management
2. Quality assurance system
3. Training process planning
4. Learning and teaching
5. Testing and assessment
6. Meeting training objectives
7. Work-based practical training
8. Counselling and support to students
9. Professional development of teachers and other practitioners
10. School as the centre of lifelong learning
11. Development projects

Quality indicators, guidelines for quality development and the basic level of quality were defined for each area.

The school has to publish the report on self-evaluation at its website every year.

2.7 Certification of National Vocational Qualifications

> >> Veronika Šlander

Slovenia has also becoming increasingly aware about the significance of knowledge obtained through non-formal and informal learning which supports a formal education process and increases the market value of knowledge. The biggest barrier standing in the way of this process is invisibility or non-recognition of such learning.

Slovenia started to overcome these barriers by way of the certification system, i.e. system of assessment and validation of national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The system was launched in 2000 as the National Vocational Qualifications Act was approved; the Act was amended in 2006. The Act was formulated by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in cooperation with social partners. The basic strategic guideline behind its conception was to put in place a transparent and coherent national qualification system and to set up the national qualifications framework.

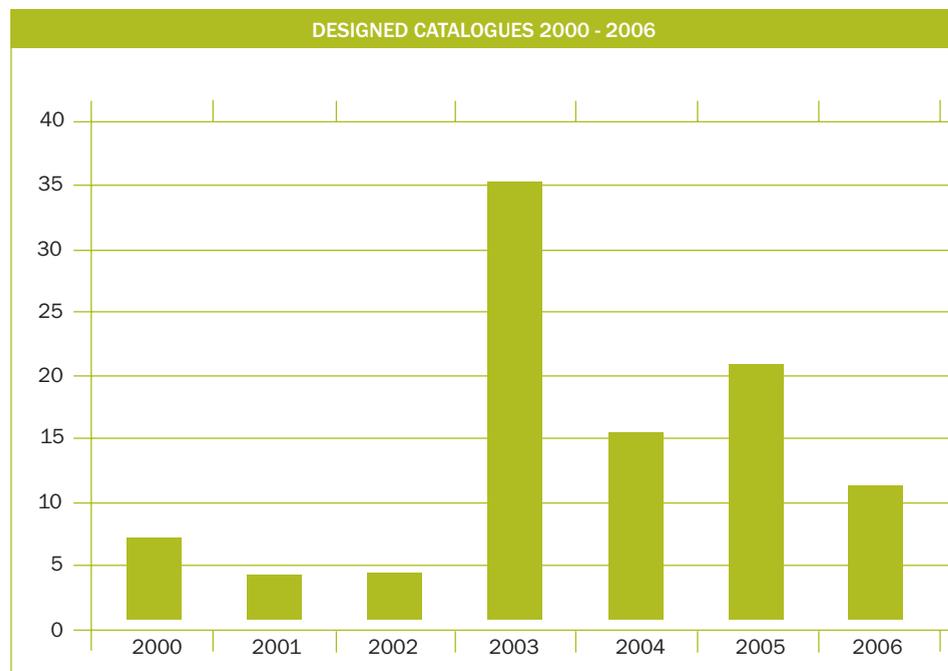
An important strategic objective pursued by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training as the central professional institution for the development of the NVQ system has been to merge VET system and certification system into a common system.

The certification system was conceived as an additional option alongside the traditional VET system: as applicants are awarded the certificate, they obtain an occupation or nationally recognised vocational qualification whereby the level of their education remains equal to their point of departure. Certificates and relevant training programmes rest on the same occupational standards and serve as the basis for national training programmes, which is a common denominator and link between the school and certification system.

The current set-up provides for certification of several NVQs which could also be obtained in VET programmes. The important group consists of those NVQs which could be acquired through assessment and validation (certification). As a rule, they upgrade the already acquired lower and secondary VET, and secondary and higher professional education. NVQs could also replace vocational education in some cases of the lowest level of qualification complexity. This group of qualifications consists of the qualifications which are being developed in response to the needs expressed by the labour market and environment, as well as life-long needs and interests of individuals.

The Vocational Qualifications Act stipulates that the Catalogue of Standards of Expertise and Skills (CSES) is the mandatory professional document providing for NVQs. Catalogue design falls within the remit of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training. 106 catalogues were compiled in the period 2000 - 2006.

Graph 2: Graphical presentation of the development of catalogues of standards of expertise and skills in the period from 2000 to 2006:



The graphical presentation of dynamics in catalogue design clearly reveals a shift in trends and dynamics in the past years. Such state of affairs does not result from the lack of initiatives, but can be attributed to the strategic direction of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training in relation to the development of occupational standards enabling the elaboration of VET programmes in the framework of the ESF project. It is to be expected that the number of catalogues will increase already in 2007, which is also a precondition for practical implementation of the NVQ system in the future.

The compilation of catalogues was followed by the development of other infrastructure needed for NVQ validation and assessments: verifying providers (a total of 73 providers were entered into the register until the end of 2006) and providing for competent counsellors and commissions for NVQ assessment and validation.

Table below indicates the number of awarded NVQ certificates in the period from 2001 to 2006 by professional fields. The data shows that the system took root in services (drivers), security and agriculture to respond to the needs arising from additional activities at farms.

Table 2: Number of awarded certificates by professional fields in the period from 2001 to 2006

Serial No.	Professional field	Awarded certificates in the period 2001-2006
1.	Art, culture	76
2.	Business and administration	0
3.	Computer science	30
4.	Technology	458
5.	Production technology	328
6.	Architecture and construction engineering	306
7.	Agriculture, forestry, fisheries	1.022
8.	Health care	312
9.	Social work	344
10.	Personal services	1.880
11.	Transport services	7.945
12.	Security	2.558
Total		15.259

Further development will reveal if current policies are appropriate, or whether we need to reflect again on the context of the system for recognition of non-formal learning:

1. setting up of a connected / integrated NVQ system in cooperation with ministries responsible for primary, secondary and higher education, and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, or
2. development of parallel / consecutive systems with regulated mutual recognition.

Recognition or formalization of non-formal and informal learning calls for changes in rooted practices and our values. We promote its further development as the system can often create solutions for those who failed to sufficiently utilise the first opportunity to obtain education in the youth, whereas every individual has a chance to upgrade his/her school education with qualifications of interest. On the other hand, it also offers a new and high-quality activity and a market niche for educational institutions, while employers are given new possibilities for the development of human capital.

2.8 Education and Training for the Introduction of New Programmes

> >> Davorin Majkus

One of the basic activities of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is to formulate expert grounds and provide for continuous professional development of VET practitioners. The Institute is in charge of education and training programmes for practitioners in the network of schools introducing new programmes, ICT novelties, Ttnet network (network of institutions dealing with teacher training), network of study groups and in the framework of requisite and reformed programmes published in the catalogue of the Ministry of Education and Sport.

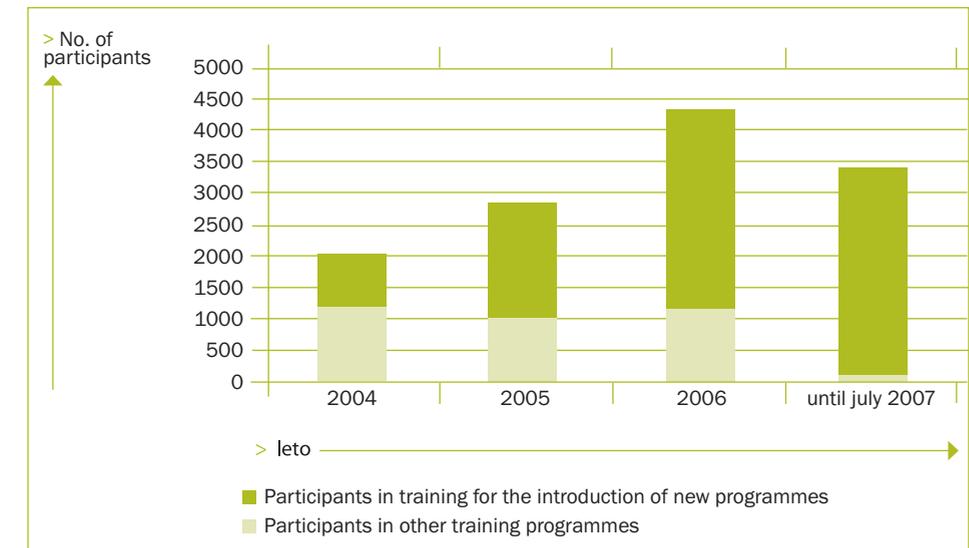
The school year 2004/05 saw the introduction of the VET programme Car Mechatronic at four pilot schools. It was conceived in line with new basic premises. Changes in planning and implementation of the new programme demanded from teachers and school staff to obtain new competences needed for the implementation of the programme.

In terms of content, education and training for the introduction of new programmes gave rise to curricular changes (planning processes), didactical changes (putting in place the learning process) and changes in organisation culture (culture of the project team implementing the programme) for the school staff. A competence based model of training proceeded in parallel to the introduction of the programme Car Mechatronic and marked a direct response to the needs focusing on individual target groups. The results translated into motivation of participants and tangible results of training applicable in practice.

Simultaneous adaptation to the needs of users and a different structure of education and training programmes in the network of public institutions was made possible by the reform of the system of further education and training by the Ministry of Education and Sport. The reform increased the autonomy of public institutions in creating the supply and asserting specific features of education and training for the acquisition of new competences in teachers. In addition, funds from the ESF provided for qualitative and quantitative increase in supply of education and training in the school network introducing new programmes. The system of teacher trainers was partially used to ensure the implementation of such a large number of education and training programmes (and provide for adequate drawing of funds from the ESF).

The chart reveals an increase in the number of participants in training programmes organised by the Institute, and a rise in the number of participants trained for the introduction of new programmes.

Graph 3: Participants in training programmes in the period from 2004 to 2007



2.8.1 Training and Counselling Concept in Introduction of New Programmes

> >> Saša Grašič

A three-dimensional definition of competence consisting of cognitive, behavioural and relational-affective component is used as a basic premise in teacher training. A more in-depth description of competence involves declarative knowledge (including tacit knowledge), cognitive and metacognitive strategies; practical skills and interests, views, values, emotional and motivation strategies (Pevc, 2004). Proceeding from the abovementioned definition, teacher training is conceived in a way to intertwine practical experience of the participants with theoretical background, while examples of good practice from the pilot phase in the introduction of new programmes are refined with theoretical background which emerged on the basis of the existing Slovene and foreign literature, as well as on the basis of interpretations originating from monitoring of new programmes.

When designing and conducting training, we follow 4 learning theories: cognitive, behaviouristic, humanistic and pragmatic (social/situational) learning centeredness (Smith, 2005).

The objective set in the process of training and counselling is for counsellors and lecturers to appear as mentors stimulating participants to actively reflect and study the material, immediately test novelties in practice and interpret findings in accordance with theoretical back-

ground. Thus, both participating partners, i.e. lecturer and participants, are confronted by ever greater demands which we have been addressing since the launch of the reform.

A system perspective is observed in development and implementation of training and counselling in the introduction of educational programmes according to new basic premises. An individual teacher is a basic unit of our target group and represents a part of the system, i.e. school, which is surrounded by different types of public. The school establishes, develops and manages relations with the public.

In addition to the need to provide for continuous quality assurance in relation to students, their parents, co-workers and school management, we have placed a special emphasis on the role of employers, labour market, development institutions, such as faculties, institutions as well as other partners and general public. Teachers are promoted to be autonomous in relations with partners and to co-shape the process; exchange professional views, experience and knowledge; match different interests; and above all to be more sensitive to the needs of students and their parents on the one hand, and to current and prospective needs of employers and labour market on the other hand.

Once we interfere into the school as a system in one segment, changes in other segments are triggered as well. We strive to take a holistic approach so that the development at all levels would proceed as systematically as possible and in line with the state-of-the art findings from different branches of science. Hence, we endeavour to affect individuals and the system simultaneously.

Training sessions instigate changes in many areas of the work performed by school staff: curriculum (planning processes), didactics (learning process implementation) and organisation culture (culture of the project team implementing the programme).

We endeavour to create the organisation culture with the following guidelines: innovation, teamwork, proactive action, self-initiative, autonomy, responsibility, trust, experimenting, creativity, simultaneous analysis of one's own practice and motivation for one's own professional and personal development, networking, common objectives, affiliation, flexibility, centeredness towards results and effects, democratic style of management and maintaining high-quality relations with all partners in the process.

Principles behind Training and Counselling of Teachers and Other Practitioners in Introduction of New Programmes

- > >> Every teacher programme assembly (group of all teachers in the educational programme of the school) represents the whole which has to deal with the implementation of the educational programme and related professional issues as a team and in close connection. Consequently, the entire assembly is targeted in a considerable number of training and counselling sessions.
- > >> Provide for the exchange of the examples of good practice and put in place mechanisms for reflection and a professional debate between teacher programme assemblies.
- > >> Support has to be offered to heads or core working team (principal, operative man-

ager and a couple of teachers) charged with the task of managing introduction and implementation of the educational programme at school. Support has to centre on management and setting up of mechanisms for mutual discussions and reflection.

- > >> Teachers in different teacher programme assemblies have to be assisted in their mutual debates, monitored and professionally backed in representation of their own professional field in a new educational programme.
- > >> Mechanisms for the introduction of new programmes have to be organised in a way for the initiative and definition of needs for professional development to come from programme teacher assemblies, their management team and individual teachers.
- > >> Training has to be adapted to the monitoring findings obtained empirically and interpreted on the basis of the existing professional theories.

We promote every teacher team by communicating the following two messages: When planning and performing your work in the classroom, you have to proceed from the context of the broader social environment. Alongside guidelines in the national educational programmes and profession, you have to also bear in mind the needs voiced by students, labour market, employers, local environment and general public. When taking and substantiating their professional decision, teachers are encouraged to reflect on the opinion of co-workers and management, as well as on the recommendations issued by support institutions, such as the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, National Education Institute, faculties, craft and commerce associations, ministries...

2.9 Dropout Prevention

- > >> Barbara Božič

The majority of European countries place particular emphasis on care for the youth and their place in society. Education represents one of the keys to social integration of the youth. School performance, successful completion of the sketched school career and education are important factors for social integration and quality of life under the youth. The Slovene VET system confronts serious problems, such as: increasingly low participation rates of students, low motivation of students, absence from school, inadequate preparation for entering the labour market, quitting school (dropout) before obtaining the desired occupation and appropriate level of education.² In the light of the stated reasons, the education system, its functioning, structure and organisation merit urgent adaptation in order to raise the level of knowledge, improve vocational qualifications and provide for personal development of generations in secondary VET schools. To the best of our abilities, we need to invest further efforts and capitalize on the initial motivation of the youth for training, upgrade it adequately and create the environment in which interesting and applicable knowledge is acquired and students advance their interests and enter into new social relations. A maximum number of the youth has to be mobilized so that they will play an active role in the economic and cultural life.

² Zevnik, M. Youth Should not be Left without Profession. Journal: Vzgoja; Ljubljana, April 2006.

2.9.1 Preventive Measures for Dropout Prevention in VET

The project for dropout reduction and prevention entitled Preventive Measures for Dropout Prevention (hereinafter referred to as "PUPO") was launched by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training and financed by the European Social Fund. The project designed preventive measures for dropout prevention.³ Proposed preventive measures were formulated on the basis of careful examination of models, strategies, methods and the so-called examples of "good practice" from different EU Member States in areas under consideration, as well as on the basis of an insight into the Slovene VET system and school legislation in force. Three prevention levels were defined and categorized:

- > >> primary prevention measures: include both counselling work prior to matriculation into the school as well as work with the entire population at the beginning of education in the secondary school so as to prevent the onset of problems;
- > >> secondary prevention measures: intervention by the secondary school in the initial phase of problems;
- > >> tertiary prevention measures pertaining to the prevention of the problem from spreading.

If these measures fail, the school can adopt further measures and refer students to other responsible institutions and help prevent social exclusion.

Proposed measures originate from numerous explanations and presumptions about the most important factors affecting dropout.⁴

The main objective of the project was to initiate and systematically monitor implementation and efficiency of preventive measures at 20 VET schools in Slovenia.

At the end of 2004, the schools participating in the project formulated comprehensive programmes for dropout prevention or programmes for the implementation of proposed preventive measures. School professional teams drew up development and implementing plans containing the vision of the programme implementation at school and the objectives which are to be fulfilled with preventive measures. The measures which had/had not already been implemented at school were identified and compared to proposed measures. They reflected on barriers and ways of overcoming them. Programmes were launched at the beginning of the school year 2005/06. The methodology for monitoring of implementation and efficiency of

³ The project was conducted in the framework of the Development Programme for putting into effect the Guidelines for Elaboration of Educational Programmes in Lower and Secondary VET.

⁴ It is generally regarded that dropout can be attributed to the intertwining of three groups of factors:

- > >> personal/pupil: lower abilities than required, inadequate learning habits, lack of interest for the occupation, low objectives, ambition etc.
- > >> social and cultural: inadequate encouragement and interest from parents, low level of expectations by parents, little financial support etc.
- > >> institutional: programme structure, organization of implementation, didactic methods, testing and assessment methods etc.

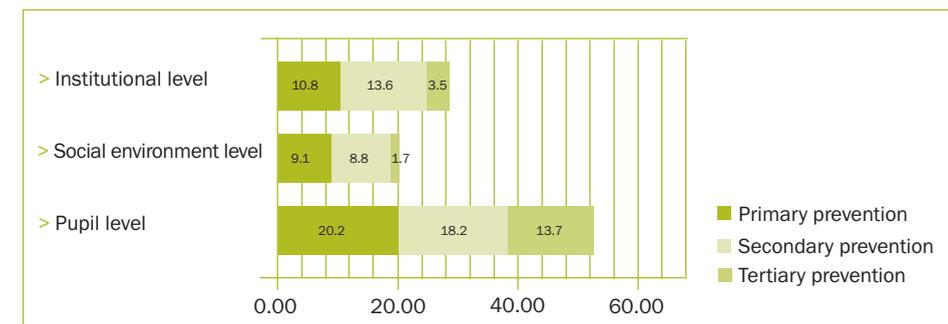
preventive measures was also elaborated at the same time. Monitoring was divided in two periods, namely: from September 2005 until March 2006 and from March 2006 until September 2006. Monitoring combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research.

2.9.2 Partial Monitoring Findings⁵ (1st Phase of Preventive Measures Implementation)

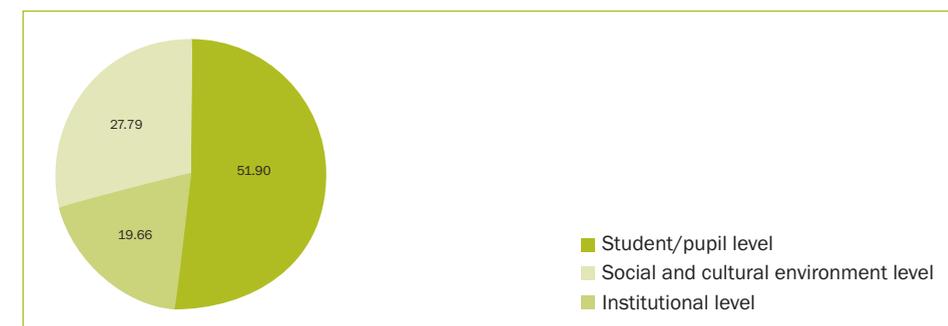
At the beginning, it needs to be pointed to the fact that the measures put in place in the project differ both in relation to the scope of its function and target groups, as well as in the implementation method.

The starting point of the analysis is the categorization of the implemented preventive measures by prevention levels and levels directly linked to the group of factors leading to dropout.

Graph 4: Classification of Implemented Preventive Measures by Prevention Levels



Graph 5: Classification of implemented preventive measures by levels



⁵ The report on monitoring of implementation and efficiency of preventive measure is in the pipeline

The classification of implemented measures indicates that the biggest number of preventive measures was put into effect at primary and secondary levels. The activities placing at the forefront students and their needs prevail.

The most frequently implemented preventive measures by individual levels and areas are as follows:

Pupil level:

- > >> Activities for successful social integration of students
- > >> Activities for personal and social development of students
- > >> Activities for raising the quality of teaching and taking into consideration students' characteristics and needs

Social and cultural environment level:

- > >> School cooperation with parents
- > >> School cooperation with the local environment

Institutional level:

- > >> School organisation work, pedagogical management of the school, cooperation between practitioners within school
- > >> Activities aimed at increased quality of learning process.

School practitioners think that the most efficient measures by individual areas are:

Activities for successful social integration of students:

- > >> Get-together and get-to-know each other activity at the beginning of the school year,
- > >> get-to-know barbecue,
- > >> class lessons for getting acquainted with each other, social games.

Activities for personal and social development of students:

- > >> Motivation workshop covering the topics of self-image,
- > >> interaction exercises.

Activities for raising quality of teaching and considering student characteristics and needs:

- > >> Workshops dealing with learning to learn,
- > >> individualised learning plans.

School cooperation with parents:

- > >> Thematic workshops for parents as well as for parents and students.

School work organisation, pedagogical management of the school, cooperation between practitioners within school:

- > >> Weekly meetings of the class teacher assembly,
- > >> regular meetings between a class teacher and individual teachers.

Activities for increased quality of the learning process:

- > >> Simultaneous monitoring of school performance and student absence by individual subjects,
- > >> testing of prior knowledge by individual subjects.

Certain problems were highlighted in the implementation of certain measures at individual schools despite enormous commitment by participating schools and teachers of selected classes. The problems which were quoted most often were: lack of motivation for cooperation in activities by students, poor motivation for cooperation by parents, lack of motivation for the introduction and implementation of changes by teachers and low value attributed to the work performed by class teachers.

It is still too early to talk about tangible dropout reduction rates after one year of preventive activities in practical work at 20 schools; however, it is safe to say that a number of qualitative changes emerged. Teachers and counsellors believe that they are reflected at different levels and take the following forms: favourable climate in classrooms and schools, reinforced links and cooperation between teachers, improved relations between teachers and students, teachers and parents and between students, feeling of acceptance, security, desire and trust in students.

Following from the words put on paper, it is clear that we need to invest more funds and perform activities within similar projects in which the participants simultaneously learn about how to best organise, promote, motivate, counsel and adapt to each other. All these activities are undertaken with a single objective in mind – school as an institution has to be transformed into a user-friendly place which has forged strong links with the environment. What is more, practice in use has to at least in part emerge from the cooperation with students by considering their desires and needs.

2.10. Publicist Activities

> >> Danuša Škapin

A range of professional publications classified in three segments was designed to support easier and qualitative dissemination of knowledge on new concepts in VET:

- > >> POTI (PATHS) – methodologies;
- > >> STOPNIČKE (STAIRS)– monitoring;
- > >> RDEČA NIT (RED THREAD) – transversal activities which appear throughout our work as a red thread.

The following publications were published in a range of publications:

- > >> methodological manual entitled **Curriculum at National and School Level in VET;**
- > >> **Development of System for Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning of VET Teachers;**
- > >> **Integration of Practical Training at School and in Work Process**, manual for organisation of work-based practical training;
- > >> manual **Assessment in New Secondary VET Programmes;**
- > >> bilingual publication **Introducing Enterprise Education into Vocational Education and Training;**
- > >> **Elaborating the School Curriculum – two examples of good practice;**
- > >> **Quality Identification and Assurance in VET**, recommendations for self-evaluation addressed to schools;
- > >> **Stay at School!**, a manual illustrating examples of good practice in school failure prevention;
- > >> **Plan for Testing and Assessment of Knowledge.**

First and Second Report on the Course of Trial Implementation of the Educational Programme Car Mechatronic were published in a series Stopničke.

Alongside regular annual publications of the Institute, the report on the project **TTCOMnet** appeared in a range of publications Rdeča nit.

All publications are also available in electronic form from the website of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training.

Two manuals for teachers were issued outside the scope of three ranges of publications:

- > >> **Project Work** - material for teachers with instructions on implementation of project work and illustration of practical examples
- > >> **Understanding Enterprise Way of Life** targeting both teachers of enterprise as well as all other teachers interested in developing enterprise thinking and creating enterprise culture in the learning process.

The funds from the European Social Fund were also used in co-financing under the head-

ing **production of learning material** in VET. Diverse learning material was conceived, ranging from traditional textbooks (e.g. Pharmaceutical Chemistry, CNC Machine Programming), manuals (e.g. manual for the use of programme Pro-Engineer Wildfire, manual Technology of Graphic Processes), worksheets (e.g. Exercises for Haematology, worksheets for design and construction in the programme Mechanical Engineering Technician), e-material (simulation programmes for optics, e-material for Pharmacognosy) to educational films (Techniques for Moving Patients or Residents, Health Care, Household and Nutrition). A wide range of learning material emerged for the programmes joiner, upholsterer, glazer and glass designer and it was designed for the integration into the so-called learning folder, a flexible form of learning material which students complement in accordance with the demands of the profession, needs of the local environment and their own interests. Some of the material was published with the assistance of publishing houses, while the majority of material is available from the website of the Institute.

It could be expected that the production of learning material will represent an important activity in further development of VET programmes, with desired broadly based material adapting to training needs in different circumstances. We need to capitalize on possibilities introduced by the electronic media, and supplement traditional textbooks with more flexible learning material in electronic form. This area undoubtedly represents a challenge for a new period in the drawing of funds from the European Social Fund.

2.11. National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications

> >> Tanja Logar, MSc

The National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications (hereinafter referred to as “NRP”) brings together different websites and on-line databases offering information on VET to potential users.

NRP incorporates the website of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (www.cpi.si), databases functioning in the framework of NRP (occupational standards database, database of catalogues of standards of professional knowledge and skills, database of accredited assessing agencies – www.nrpslo.org) and other valuable information on vocational qualifications.

Other websites, e. g. the website of the national Europass Centre (www.europass.si) and the National Observatory of Slovenia (www.refernet.si) also constitute an important part of information support.

Funds from the European Social Fund made it possible to introduce a number of novelties in secondary VET. All information was made available through the quickest possible route to broad professional and lay public, thereby greatly benefiting from the information support which had already been in place at the Institute and was upgraded in this way.

The results originating from the projects financed from the European Social Fund will also be made available through the Internet to all interested parties in the future. In this way, high quality archives of current and completed projects as well as their results will serve as an interesting tool for employers of the Institute, as well as for all other stakeholders in secondary VET (teachers, principals, interest groups, students, parents and other).

2.12 Europass Mobility

> >> Boštjan Košorok

The European Council set itself the main objective under the heading employment and economic development of a social society at the turn of the century, namely to become the fastest growing, knowledge and innovation based economy in the world. The expansion of EU borders did not only bring about increased employment opportunities and exploitation of human potential, but also greater mobility, which has remained one of the key challenges for the European Community as a whole as well as its Member States.

Moving to a different state to find a job can represent a very useful experience, both professionally and personally, however, this is sometimes far from easy. The first barrier standing in the way is to find a job at the unfamiliar labour market. It could happen that the host country fails to recognise the employee's qualifications and experience, or the demand to master a language of the host country is imposed on the employer. Last but not least, there are inevitable administrative, legal and personal costs in relation to the relocation to another state. The key challenge the EU is facing today is how to facilitate mobility by reducing the remaining barriers, whether they are legal, practical or social/behavioural.

To serve this purpose, the tool called Europass was developed at European level. This is a single folder of documents enabling its owner to comprehensively present his/her range of knowledge and competences. This extremely applicable instrument has been accessible throughout EU since 2005 and currently consists of five documents (CV, Mobility, Diploma Supplement, Certificate Supplement and Language Passport) available in electronic and paper form, adorned with a uniform logo in all EU Member States, thereby improving its visibility and consequently facilitating the mobility of its owners.

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (www.cpi.si) assesses that five documents facilitating transparency and consequently also mobility serve the purpose of an easier presentation of the individual's acquired knowledge in a uniform and transparent way. Having set up the Europass Centre (www.europass.si), the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training has assumed the role of a national coordinator and has consequently committed itself to fulfil important objectives of European education and training systems in the last decade. As for improving transparency, better readability and visibility of qualifications and competences (in higher education as well as in VET), the Europass Centre has the resources for facilitating mobility of students, secondary school pupils/apprentices and workforce. The Eu-

ropass Centre has been cooperating with social partners to design the Certificate Supplement and coordinate the edition of the Europass Mobility in order to present knowledge, skills and competences in an easier and more efficient way. People involved in the Europass initiative are well aware of the fact that efficient and appropriate presentations of skills and competences will become one of the key instruments for meeting the set professional objectives at the common labour and training market of a diverse Europe. Thus, individuals have been offered a tool in bringing about a genuine European lifelong learning area, promoting employment, reducing poverty and assisting in efforts to promote active European citizenship.

By offering Europass as a tool for putting in place a better mobility framework to support education and training in the EU, we contribute to the realization of the knowledge-based economy, which is essential for job creation, sustainable development, research and innovation in EU Member States. Increased mobility is a prerequisite if Europe is to meet its objective and better use of posts advertised at the labour market.. With this in mind, the European Employment Strategy bolsters efforts of the Member States which have embarked on structural reforms at national labour market so that they would exploit human potential in a best possible way and create new jobs. As a rule, employees who have accumulated experience of job mobility are better qualified to manage changes which could help in developing new skills and knowledge, boost work satisfaction and heighten employment prospects. A path for the presentation of acquired abilities and competences also leads through Europass.

2.13 Asserting and Promoting VET

> >> Miha Lovšin, MSc

This idea is not new, but has so far been labelled as the promotion of VET occupations⁶. The VET area merited a special presentation at the Days of Slovene Education (1993-2000) in Ljubljana and at the Festival of Schooling and Education in 2001 at Celje. The Chamber of Craft of Slovenia and the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training have also been organising presentations of occupations at the International Trade Fair at Celje since 1996.

Eventually, needs and primarily the fact that matriculation rates into VET programmes experience a constant drop, transcended the concept of these presentations. Thus, eleven partner institutions involved in training and employment process joined forces and set up the Programme Council as the basis for long-term and efficient communication support for promotion of VET occupations in 2003. The appointed working body managed, supervised and coordinated the project of regional promotion of VET occupations at national level. A number of comprehensive regional presentations were conducted. Also, individual companies launched presentations of

⁶ Different documents employ different formulations. We have been using the uniform term **promotion of VET occupations** throughout the period as we felt this really includes all implemented activities. By way of exception, we use a different term in cases where we derive from concrete documents.

VET occupations targeted at primary school pupils in finishing classes and their parents. The information material on VET educational programmes was also published.

In addition to abovementioned presentations and published information material, activities in the context of promotion of VET occupations were also performed in the school year 2005/2006: review of regional occupational needs at the labour market, above all technology, collecting data on registration in educational programmes by areas, conducting polls on promotion of VET occupations in all Slovene regions.

The milestone in the process was the year of 2006 as the Ministry of Education and Sport appointed interdepartmental Programme Council for Promotion of Occupations. This body upgrades the working body set up in 2003. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training serves as the main holder of activity in this Council.

This period has also witnessed the production of different documents evaluating the actions for promotion of VET occupations which had already been conducted. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- > >> students and their parents were satisfied with activities for promotion of VET occupations and they acquired requisite information on further training,
- > >> students regard practical presentations as the most attractive,
- > >> employer presence at promotional activities is of utmost importance for students and their parents,
- > >> promotional activities at school need to proceed in a coordinated and continuous manner

The activities for promotion of VET occupations have been in place for more than a decade, while these efforts have been stepped up even further since 2003. Both students and their parents are satisfied with the method of promotion. The matriculation rates into VET programmes, however, are still declining. In addition, the question of scope or effect of even the best conceived activity for promotion of VET occupation remains high on the agenda. At the same time, this question also opens up a possibility to rethink the message from Maastricht. In other words, where is the chance for boosting the image of VET and above all to raise interest for such training?

At a first glance, meaningless change in formulation from promotion of VET occupations to assertion and promotion of VET occupations creates the room to think beyond the closed circle of competition between general education and VET programmes. The fact is that both types of educational programmes differ and have been traditionally chosen by different target groups. This very fact can be seen as competitive edge for VET programmes, while at the same time these programmes have to adapt in terms of ever closer cooperation with employers, introduction of different types of instruction, maintaining of complexity in programmes, employment of more qualified counsellors, improving prospects for the inclusion of foreigners, unemployed, dropouts etc.

We still failed to provide an answer to the question of scope or effect of promotion of VET oc-

cupations, yet it is certain that with such and similar activities for VET assertion and promotion, the promotion gains ground and credibility with students and their parents.

In addition to support at national level, these efforts call for interested and qualified professional public and naturally a sound financial basis. The state has shown commitment by earmarking funds from the budget, whereas the instrument in the framework of the Community Structural Funds provides for additional resources for performing activities for VET assertion and promotion.

2.14 International Cooperation

- > >> Mirjana Kovač, MSc

International activities of the Institute centre on:

- > >> bilateral cooperation with related institutions (CINOP, BIBB...),
- > >> projects of European Commission within the Education and Culture Directorate,
- > >> cooperation with countries of South East Europe,
- > >> Leonardo da Vinci projects,
- > >> international networking: Cedefop, ReferNet, Teacher, Training Network...

The beginning of international cooperation can be traced back to bilateral cooperation with related institutions in Italy, Austria and Europe in 1997.

The year of 1998 was of special relevance as Slovenia participated in Leonardo da Vinci projects for the first time, and submitted applications for 3 projects by 31 March 1998, while Slovene organisations participated as partners in 21 projects. The Institute also presented application for its first project entitled "Regular Forecasting of the Training Needs: Comparative Analysis, Elaboration and Application of Methodology".

As early as 1999, the Institute transferred its knowledge and experience to other countries in need of professional assistance. In cooperation with CINOP – Centre for Development of Innovation in Education from the Netherlands the Institute offered professional assistance to Latvia in two fields: development of partnership in VET and establishment of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training.

To pave the way for the introduction of the European Social Fund, the National Training Institution (NTI) was set up in 2000/2001. It took over the role of training and information about the significance of the European Social Fund. This period was characterised by extensive bilateral cooperation:

- > >> Durham University from Great Britain in introduction of enterprise,

- > >> Dutch institute CINOP in the introduction of modules into the curriculum and certification system,
- > >> Danish Holstebro Technical College in preparation for ESF projects.

Bilateral cooperation continued in 2001/2002 and even expanded by the incorporation of the German institution GTZ which provided German expert to help us introduce the method Leittext in the 4-year educational programme in economics. The Institute further enhanced its cooperation within Leonardo da Vinci projects:

- > >> Craft to Technology and Technology to Craft (CITTIC) in cooperation with the Glass School from Rogaška Slatina and foreign partners which gave rise to a new programme in glass industry,
- > >> Project VirtuOrientation addressing the development of career orientation tools,
- > >> Role of linguistic competences in employment and workforce mobility,
- > >> Introducing innovation in SMEs (INNOBA).

The bilateral project Qualifying for Europe was conducted in 2002/2003 in association with the Netherlands. It dealt with international comparability and recognition of occupations and their match with the needs of the economy. The Institute cooperated within the framework of Socrates projects in the project bearing the name Wizard Toolbox with the view to put in place flexible tools for education and training of the most vulnerable groups.

In the period 2003/2004, the focus of international cooperation of the Institute was on raising transparency and comparability of qualifications, and quality in VET, integration of formal and non-formal learning as well as in service and further training of teachers. Proceeding from the stated guidelines, the Institute participated in the Phare project entitled Training – Key to Improved Employability where unemployed in construction engineering were trained. The following projects were conducted in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme: Training of Trainers - AGETT (training of counsellors in adult education), Total Counselling which helped us develop a model for total counselling and information targeting the young who are not included in the education system or labour market and EuroCertStaff oriented towards certification of quality in SMEs operating in services (hair dresser's, dry cleaner's...)

The Institute was a partner in new Leonardo da Vinci projects in 2004/2005: European Occupational Profile – Eco Recycler (RecyOccupation), Experiential Approach to Analytical Chemistry for VET Schools, Promoting Lifelong Learning through Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in the Area of Trade.

The international activities expanded in the period of 2005/2006 to include the countries of South East Europe, most notably Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia by way of professional assistance in VET development and study visits. Leonardo da Vinci projects incorporated the project Building a European Passport for Transparent and International Certification (B.E.A.T.R.I.C), study on the examples of good practice in catering and quality in VET (QUTE) to produce self-evaluation instruments in VET schools.

The year 2006 saw the conclusion of the project TCOMNet within the framework of Phare

2003. The project presented a basic instrument for the introduction of the lifelong learning concept in education and training of teachers with the focus on personal and professional development of teachers. The Institute joined some of Leonardo da Vinci projects as a partner and submitted its application as a partner in a consortium with institutions from Greece and Austria at the tender for support of lifelong learning in Macedonia.

Implementation of International Project Results in the VET System

Cooperation in international projects gives rise to the toolbox of different innovations, develops partnerships at international level, provides for exchange of experiences and examples of good practice, while also contributing to personal and professional development of the Institute employees. All these features benefit the development of VET.

Transfer of project results into practice is evident from Chart below:

Chart 3 : Transfer of project results in the development of VET system

Serial No.	Project	Knowledge transfer in VET system
1.	Qualifying for Europe	Expert grounds for mutual recognition of qualifications, also foreign ones.
2.	Wizard Toolbox	Developed tools for education and training of vulnerable groups in society. Tools in the form of a manual were transferred to project PUM (Project Learning for Youth).
3.	Phare 2000 - Training – Key to Better Employability for training of the unemployed in construction engineering for the profession bricklayer in Savinjska region	3 catalogues of knowledge skills and competences for the occupation bricklayer at level 3. These are the only catalogues providing for certification in construction engineering. All unemployed participating in the project found a job.
4.	AGETT	Developed 40-hour programme for counsellors in adult education organised by the Adult Education Institute and for counsellors involved in NVQ assessment and validation conducted by the Institute for Vocational Education and Training.
5.	Total Counselling	Manual Total Counselling Setting up of the Network for Supporting the Youth http://cpi.ism.si
6.	Virtuorientation	First Slovene web portal providing comprehensive information on training and employment in one place www.virtuorientation.net
7.	Bilateral cooperation with Durham University – introduction of enterprise	Teacher training carried out. Developed resource materials: Enterprise in the World of VET. Working for Myself, Understanding Entrepreneurial Way of Life.

Serial No.	Project	Knowledge transfer in VET system
8.	Cooperation with CINOP-Centre for Innovation in Education established within the Phare MOCCA programme	Professional assistance offered to the Institute in the introduction of modules into curriculum, certification system, internal organisation and classification of the Institute.
9.	Promoting lifelong learning through recognition of non-formal and informal learning	International comparison between educational programmes in the area of trade was used.
10.	QUTE – quality in VET	Computer application for self-evaluation used by: School Centre Velenje, trial implementation at 12 biotechnical schools and School Centre Kranj
11.	European Occupational Profile - Eco Recycler	Designed NVQs for waste manager, hazardous waste manager, machine and device operator for waste management, educational programme environment technician is in the pipeline
12.	TTCOMNet – basic concept behind introduction of life-long learning	On-line application for seminars for further training is in the test phase

3. Conclusion and looking ahead

> >> Mirjana Kovač, MSc

The funds from the European Social Fund in the programme period from 2004 to 2007 allocated to the area of VET have given rise to a number of development shifts:

- > >> reform and development of educational programmes
- > >> training of teachers in secondary VET schools, principals, professional counsellors....
- > >> providing quality in VET with the emphasis on the development of the self-evaluation model
- > >> monitoring of educational programmes providing useful feedback to enable increased flexibility of VET in accordance with the needs of the economy.

The next section enumerates just a few of development achievements recorded in the programme period 2004 - 2007:

- > >> More than 300 occupational standards were designed and they serve as the basis for

both educational programmes as well as catalogues for obtaining NVQs.

- > >> More than 15 thousand NVQ certificates in various professional fields were awarded.
- > >> Educational programmes by individual professional fields were elaborated: textile and manufacture, design and photography, chemistry and glass industry, optics, printing and multimedia, transport and logistics, beauty care, hairdressing, business and administration, health care, dental care, pharmaceutical industry and laboratory medicine, car mechatronics, computer science, woodworking and catering.
- > >> Different learning materials were produced, ranging from traditional textbooks to work sheets, e-material and educational films.
- > >> Almost 260 education and training programmes were performed.
- > >> More than 6000 participants attended education and training for the introduction of new programmes.

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training aims to put a special emphasis on further development activities in VET in a new programme period from 2007 to 2013:

- > >> development and reform of VET system with the view to raise quality of vocational education and training in line with the needs of the economy
- > >> developments of an individual, i.e. high-quality and systematic training of teachers and other trainers.

Further development of VET has to centre on a holistic approach to the development of education and training programmes, including design of occupational standards for the entire professional field, elaboration of education and training programmes, introduction of novelties and monitoring of their implementation in the actual environment. Hence, the education and training process will produce an all-round qualified person capable of efficient, successful and responsible performance of tasks in a relevant professional field. Consequently, the competence of an individual has to develop in all dimensions: cognitive, functional and ethical.

In order to meet all objectives in VET, our development tasks will also be directed towards the recognition of non-formal learning and integration of school and certification system in the light of lifelong learning and establishment of the national qualifications framework.

Better quality of VET remains one of the key development objectives. The concept of quality assurance rests on the common European Quality Assurance Framework and consists of the following elements: planning, implementation, evaluation, feedback and possible proposals for improvements.

Education, training and further training of all stakeholders in education and training process represents a solid basis for putting in place a comprehensive system of quality assurance in VET. High-quality and systematic training of teachers and other trainers helps develop all potentials leading to successful and responsible work in a modern society.

Quality of VET is not possible without raising awareness about the significance of VET with the

emphasis on occupation in excess demand and other high potential occupations. As a result, further activities will undoubtedly place at the forefront information on VET prospects and raising its profile. The messages of VET prospects and its better image will be communicated to students, their parents as well as general public.

Last but not least, one cannot overlook international cooperation which today offers immense possibilities exactly in the field of VET in order to provide for transfer of knowledge, examples of good practice and open up the path in search of new and innovative solutions. Participation of the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training in various international projects, networks and networking with related institutions in Europe serves as the starting point for further development activities in VET in Slovenia

