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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

SLOVAKIA

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 16. It covers basic education of a duration of 9 years *(základná škola)* and the first year of upper general and vocational secondary education. Basic education is organised as a single structure (without distinction between primary and lower secondary levels). Pupils receive the same education and do not have to change schools. Some intellectually gifted pupils may enter *gymnázium* (lower secondary level) at the age of 10 or 12 (after taking an entrance exam). The end of basic education is a key moment in terms of guidance. Pupils have the possibility to go on to general or vocational upper secondary education after passing an entrance exam.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The responsibilities of the education and employment sectors in terms of educational and vocational guidance are defined in law No 29/1984 on education, law No 279/1993 on schools and law No 5/2004 on employment services, as well as in their many amendments and revisions. Educational guidance is governed by decree No 43/1996 of the Ministry of Education. The new school law No 245/2008 adopted in summer 2008 will replace law No 279/1993 from 1 September 2008.

The strategy for lifelong training and guidance *(Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania a celoživotného poradenstva)* adopted by the government in 2007 proposes to bring together the lifelong guidance and counselling systems which have been separate until now. The need to increase the number of experienced professionals for the development of policies in this area was declared to be urgent. In the framework of this strategy, the integrated policy system at national level was established, a group of national experts for the development of quality standards was formed and the quality assurance system was introduced.

Two other official documents were adopted in 2007 in the framework of the national policy in the area of guidance. The document entitled ‘The development of the educational and psychological guidance system and implementation plan’ *(Koncepcia pedagogicko-psychologického poradenského systému a jeho implementácie do praxe)* underlines the importance of career counselling which should accompany educational and psychological guidance in schools, and redefines the role of counsellors and school psychologists. The document entitled ‘The development of counselling in special education’ *(Koncepcia špeciálnopedagogického poradenstva)* complements the first and emphasises the need to specify the missions of guidance counsellors and teachers in the area of special educational needs.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of providing educational and vocational information, guidance and counselling services are shared between schools and other institutions in the education sector and the public employment service.

In the framework of the education sector, guidance is ensured mainly by teachers with guidance responsibilities – educational counsellors employed by basic and upper secondary schools, school psychologists and special teachers, as well as by counsellors in educational and psychological counselling centres (see below).

An advisory body of the Ministry of Education – the methodological council for educational and psychological counselling and prevention *(Metodická rada pre výchovné a psychologické poradenstvo a prevenciu)* – was established. It is made up of representatives of staff at educational and psychological counselling centres, counsellors, school psychologists and other experts in the area. Its role is to supervise the activities of schools in the area of guidance, give advice and make comments on official documents, draft laws and proposals for action, etc.

The Ministry of Education authorised the Research Institute For Child Psychology and Patho-psychology to support, develop methodology and coordinate all parts of the school guidance system.

In the employment sector, the development of policies and the establishment of guidance services are managed by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family *(Úrad práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny)* under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family *(Ministersto práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny)*. For the most part, the services in this sector are not aimed at young people in the education system. The Office is responsible for prevention programmes in upper secondary schools.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Vocational guidance education is integrated into other relevant subjects. There is an optional subject entitled ‘Introduction to the world of work’ *(Úvod do sveta práce)*, available in the last two years of study in upper secondary school.

To support entrepreneurship as part of professional training, the subject ‘Training firm’ was introduced into the curricula of upper secondary schools as an optional subject.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Official regulations do not provide for traineeships in the basic education curricula. Children under age 15 are not allowed to go to real working environments except in some cases mentioned in law.

Traineeships are a regular part of education curricula for all vocational schools. Their proportion of the total curriculum varies from about 15 % (for ISCED 3A) up to more than 50 % (for ISCED 3C). Practical training may be carried out at school training facilities and/or in companies.

Some schools take advantage of community programmes or good cooperation with foreign partners and organise part of obligatory practical training abroad.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

There is a low level of contact with the professional world in basic schools in terms of career guidance. Schools organise group visits to companies for a duration of 1 or 2 days per school year. The content and objectives of an excursion are decided by a head teacher. Excursions to local companies are only part of all types of contact. Excursions are supposed to help pupils become more familiar with history, nature and society within the context of their studies. The Ministry of Education determines the duration of an excursion from 1 day for the first level of basic school up to 7 days for upper secondary schools.

Schools have the possibility to organise competitions for pupils in cooperation with companies. People from the professional world may participate in the jury.

Guidance services at school

All basic schools *(základné školy)* as well as general and vocational upper secondary schools employ teachers with guidance responsibilities, referred to as educational counsellors *(výchovný poradca)*. The counsellor fulfils tasks in the area of education, vocational orientation of pupils and prevention of problematic and delinquent behaviour. He/she gives consultations to children and their parents and must provide pupils with information on educational pathways, professional training and career possibilities as well as on the situation on the labour market. Counsellors are the contact people between schools and specialised counselling facilities. Educational counsellors use a separate counselling room with computers with access to the Internet. Their teaching duties are reduced by 1 hour per week for every 300 pupils, up to 3 hours per week. Career guidance services are concentrated mainly during the last two years of study.

Counsellors do not have the role of evaluating the individual capacities and attitudes of pupils. This evaluation is ensured by specialists in the Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres *(školská pedagogicko-psychologická poradňa)* (see below). Special attention in terms of counselling and guidance is paid to pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, physically handicapped as well as gifted and talented students. In certain cases (5-6 % of schools), these counsellors are assisted by school psychologists *(školský psychológ)*.

Special teachers *(školskí špeciálni pedagógovia)* provide specific help and counselling to pupils with special educational needs in separate special schools and in those which practise integration.

Guidance services outside school

The 79 Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres *(pedagogicko-psychologické poradne)* employ psychologists, teachers and social workers and offer their services to pre-primary, basic and secondary schools. These services are intended for pupils and students as well as for staff and parents, and cover the whole range of psychological, social and

educational activities. Generally these include diagnostics, counselling, therapeutic help and prevention and rehabilitation activities.

Vocational counselling and guidance are among the most important activities, as well as being one the most frequent requests from clients: according to statistics, more than 27 % of all individual consultations are centred on this area. In the field of career development, professionals in centres focus on life planning, study and vocational choice, development of inner strengths, potentials and desirable personal characteristics, adaptation to school or jobs, and programmes on the social and psychological skills needed in the world of work. Vocational counselling and guidance is carried out in an individual or group setting and information services are an integral part of it. According to Law No 43/1996, centres are obliged to gather vocational and study information, and this, together with information on the labour market, should be distributed to pupils, their parents and educational counsellors. Internet-based guidance is also provided by centres. Consultations are offered on the request of pupils or parents and usually last 3 weeks.

The information and counselling services offered by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family are aimed at people seeking employment. Although pupils in compulsory education are not a target group for these services, the Office can offer lectures on the prevention of unemployment with the permission of schools.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

Educational counsellors *(výchovní poradcovia)* are teachers who are qualified in a subject (without special guidance qualifications) and who are obliged to complete specific ongoing training of a minimum of 200 hours. In order to provide them with more time for accomplishing their tasks as counsellors, their teaching load is reduced. Ongoing training programmes are offered by the Methodological and Educational centre and are approved by the Ministry of Education following verification by two independent experts.

School psychologists *(školskí psychológovia)* have a master's degree in psychology or educational psychology.

An initial training programme in vocational guidance was developed by the National Vocational Education Institute *(Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania)* in the framework of the Leonardo de Vinci MODILE-EUROCARCO project. The modules established in the framework of this programme were accredited for the ongoing training of educational counsellors.

In the employment sector, counsellors must have at least a bachelor's degree in any field of study.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Cooperation between schools and parents is ensured by associations of parents, which are established at basic and upper secondary schools and which take part in school management. Schools also organise regular meetings for parents to inform them of the possibilities for further studies and employment for their children, especially in the last 2 years of their studies in basic and upper secondary schools.

Cooperation between employers, schools and stakeholders is not regulated by any law. Only informal partnerships exist, which are usually established by ESF projects at local level. These examples of cooperation are separate activities without official state support.

Generally, the head teacher is responsible for the organisation of cooperation between schools and other stakeholders, with the support of the Office for Regional Self-government (founder of state upper secondary schools).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Although it is not clearly defined, the most important role in the production of information on careers is played by the Ministry of Education and its institutions, as well as by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Information on studies at secondary schools, their programmes, admissions criteria, etc. is gathered and published yearly by all the school information centres and by local administrations. Furthermore, towards the end of each year, the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education publishes a guide containing all the useful information on secondary schools and universities. The Ministry of Education runs a website – www.modernaskola.sk – which is a useful source of information.

The Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is obliged to monitor the situation on the labour market and publish statistics in the area. It gathers information on the situation of unemployed people (such as their education level or types of qualifications). This information is transferred to the education authorities. The Office's department of client services is establishing a complex system of information on careers, in particular employment descriptions, programmes accessible via computer, guides, etc. A self-exploration website (in the framework of the Leonardo de Vinci II programme) intended for those seeking employment can be found at www.povolania.eu. Information for job seekers as well as for employers on the content of different occupations is gathered on the website www.istp.sk

Information on methodology or other aspects of vocational guidance is the responsibility of the Methodological and Educational Centre and Research Institute for Child Psychology and Patho-psychology. Their websites contain many useful links and information in this field. The Association of Educational Counsellors runs a website with applicable laws, methodological directions and guidelines as well as links to related institutions and websites.

The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has been a stimulus for producing the Strategy for Lifelong Training and Guidance, and thanks to its initiatives, there is an effort to establish better cooperation between the education sector and the labour and social affairs sector in terms of sharing and gathering information.

Internet references

Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania: www.siov.sk

Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva: www.uips.sk

UIPŠ – školské výpočtové stredisko: www.svsba.sk/index.php?id=poradca

Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychoĺogie: www.vudpap.sk

Metodicko-pedagogické centrum: www.mctba.sk

Asociácia výchovných poradcov: http://asociaciavp.szm.sk/

Národný úrad práce sociálnych vecí a rodiny: www.upsvar.sk

Portál – Spreivodca svetom povolaní: www.povolania.eu

Portál ISTP: www.istp.sk

Sources

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