



Presentation of results of the Modernisation of Vocational Education project

Publication prepared as part of the project »Modernisation of upper secondary vocational and technical education including apprenticeship, modernisation of higher vocational programmes and establishment of digitally supported training places 2022–2026«

June 2026

Presentation of results of the Modernisation of Vocational Education project

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Ljubljana, June 2026

The project is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Education, and the European Union – NextGenerationEU. The project is being implemented in accordance with the plan under Development Area 3: Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Component 12: Strengthening competences, especially digital and those required by new occupations and the green transition (C3 K5), through the following measures: Reform C: Modernisation of upper secondary vocational and technical education including apprenticeship, modernisation of higher vocational programmes and establishment of digitally supported training places; and Investment G: Strengthening cooperation between the education system and the labour market: modernisation of upper secondary vocational and technical education, including apprenticeships, reform of short-cycle higher vocational education programmes and establishment of digitally supported training places.

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 283102211

ISBN 978-961-7139-95-2 (PDF)

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Introduction

Vocational education and training plays an important role in the development of society and the economy. It enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences that are directly linked to work, technological development and the needs of the environment. At the same time, however, this field still often fails to enjoy the recognition and standing that correspond to its actual importance for the development of individuals, the economy and society. It is precisely for this reason that the development of vocational education and training has taken place in close connection with social, economic and technological changes. The foundations of the modern vocational education and training system in Slovenia were laid in the early 1990s. Following independence, a conceptual framework for a new system was developed in 1992, drawing on research and debate within the education community that had already begun in the late 1980s. This framework was subsequently largely incorporated into the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1995) and embedded in legislation through the Vocational Education and Training Act (1996). On this basis, the first guidelines for the preparation of education programmes were also developed. Prepared with the participation of numerous domestic stakeholders and international experts as part of the Phare programme, they established the professional framework for the development of accredited vocational education and training programmes.

The decades following the establishment of the system have brought profound changes in society, the economy, the labour market and technology. The digital and green transitions, new forms of work and an ever-accelerating pace of development require different knowledge and competences and present the education system with new challenges. These call for programmes that are more flexible, more up to date and more strongly focused on developing the competences that enable individuals to participate successfully in work and society. It is precisely these challenges that are addressed by the ***Modernisation of Vocational Education project***, or, to give it its full title, “**Modernisation of upper secondary vocational and technical education including apprenticeship, modernisation of higher vocational programmes and establishment of digitally supported training places 2022–2026**”, which is being implemented by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and

Training (CPI) under the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). The project is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union – NextGenerationEU.

The project represents an important step forward in the modernisation of vocational education and training in Slovenia. At the same time, it creates an opportunity for a broader systemic reflection on the future development of vocational education and training and on how to make it more responsive to the needs of society and the economy. Its aim is not only to modernise individual education programmes, but also to strengthen the system more broadly through the development of background and methodological materials, support for schools in introducing revised programmes, and the development of digital solutions to support work-based learning. By 2026, the project will deliver the revision of 25 upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes and 16 short-cycle higher vocational education programmes. The modernisation is based on a wide range of studies, analyses, background documents and methodological materials prepared in cooperation with experts, schools and representatives of industry. These activities are intended to support competence-based education, strengthen the integration of theory and practice and promote the development of competences relevant to the digital and green transitions. An important part of the project also consists of expert meetings, conferences and discussions that provide opportunities for the exchange of experience, reflection on achievements and joint consideration of the future direction of vocational education and training. The project therefore represents far more than the revision of individual programmes. It marks a broader developmental shift in the field of vocational education and training. Through it, we aim to reinforce the importance of this sector, support schools in implementing change and contribute to the development of a system that will continue to provide high-quality education and foster the competences needed for work, life and society.

Our sincere thanks go to all education professionals, school leaders and experts who contributed their knowledge, experience and time and thereby made the successful implementation of the project possible. We would also like to thank the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia. Special thanks are due to the Ministry of Education for its funding and support

Danijela Makovec Radovan, PhD

Competence-based vocational education and training

The need for a competence-based approach to vocational education emerged in response to the recognition that graduates possessed sufficient vocational and theoretical knowledge but showed shortcomings, particularly in the skills and attitudes required for effective performance in their occupations (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder and Wesselink, 2004). In Slovenia, the idea of competence-based education gained momentum shortly after the turn of the millennium and became a national policy direction through its inclusion in the “Guidelines for the preparation of lower and secondary vocational education programmes and secondary technical education programmes”. Since then, all programmes within this part of the education system have been developed according to the principles of competence-based education. Yet with every reform, it seems as though we find ourselves starting again somewhere near the beginning.

In vocational education, the concept of competences, “understood holistically – that is, three-dimensionally – can be of great significance, since it enables the overcoming of one of the main challenges that arises in any systemic reform of education programmes, namely the search for a balance between general and vocationally specific objectives and content” (Medveš 2010, p. 56). However, it is not enough to define competences and their dimensions in legal and professional documents. Just as competences must be understood in a holistic way, so too must the introduction of a competence-based approach into the system. It must be addressed comprehensively and at all three levels: the national level, the school level and the teacher level. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that competence-based education is both a systemic organisational measure and a pedagogical approach.

Analysis of previous implementation efforts has revealed two key findings. First, implementation is successful when it is supported both systemically and systematically. The state must therefore establish, and continuously provide schools with, the conditions that make a shift towards competence-based programme delivery both possible and achievable. Second, a competence-based approach represents a significant departure from a subject-based model towards one in which education programmes can no longer be delivered without cooperation and integration among teachers from different subject areas. Alongside inconsistencies in systemic support,

the greatest difficulties in the past arose precisely in curriculum planning. Its underdevelopment was often the reason why, despite initial enthusiasm, teaching soon reverted to a subject-based approach. Particular attention was therefore paid to this issue in the current modernisation. Although the catalogues of knowledge retain a subject-based structure, they incorporate all three dimensions of competences and set clear expectations that learners will develop them throughout the educational process. To support schools in the flexible delivery of programmes, which for all its advantages can also present considerable challenges, background documentation has been developed to facilitate planning the learning process both at programme level and at year-group level.

The documents have been prepared and the next phase is now beginning: the implementation of the revised programmes. This phase invariably lifts the veil on a number of issues. It will show how clear and workable the prepared documents are and, at the same time, how effectively implementation is supported by the systemic measures that the state is responsible for providing. Ultimately, it will also reveal the extent to which we, as providers of education programmes, are genuinely committed to a competence-based approach. Competence-based programmes bring changes to a school's existing organisational culture and to established approaches to planning, teaching and assessment, which is often one of the reasons why progress falls short of expectations. It would be unwise if, this time too, we were merely to mark time and remain within the safe confines of established habits. Progress is essential. Yet it can only be achieved if every level of the VET system, and every individual operating within it, approaches the implementation phase with full seriousness and responsibility. Systemic reforms are never set in motion by formal documents alone, but by the invisible connections between government decisions, the life of the school and what happens in the classroom. Only through their close interaction and shared commitment can success be achieved.

Klara Skubic Ermenc, PhD

From project to practice: challenges and achievements of social partnership in VET

Several years of monitoring the introduction and implementation of apprenticeships and the development of social partnership in Slovenia have given rise to a key question: under what conditions can project outcomes truly take root in practice – and why does this so often fail to happen?

Experience shows that project solutions are successfully transferred into practice only when they respond directly to the concrete needs of the education sector, rather than merely to broader, often abstract European agendas. Stable political support is also of crucial importance. Equally important are a well-designed methodological approach, a clearly defined research problem and carefully considered research questions. Participatory research represents a particular strength in this regard. In the case of apprenticeship monitoring, proposals for improvement were developed through continuous dialogue with stakeholders at every stage of the evaluation process.

Monitoring of apprenticeships took the form of a series of interrelated evaluations that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. They were based on the premise that the success of apprenticeships is inseparable from effective social partnership and high-quality social dialogue. For this reason, the research also focused on the broader dimensions of vocational education: the quality of social dialogue, the capacities of social partners and employers, and the epistemological and organisational conditions required to ensure the quality of apprenticeships. Particular attention was also paid to the alignment – or lack of alignment – of public policies on education, social affairs and labour, and the concrete consequences of this for schools, employers and young people.

The findings reveal that social dialogue in Slovenia, despite its established tradition, is not functioning to its full potential. Among the key obstacles are insufficient interdepartmental cooperation, particularly between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, limited interest in apprenticeships among policy-makers, and a tendency to place responsibility for apprenticeships primarily on the education sector. At the same time, the capacities of social partners and employers to provide high-quality support for apprenticeships are often inadequate, with the particularly weak role of trade unions standing out as a

significant concern. Although employers show an interest in participating, they are often either unwilling or unable to assume a greater share of responsibility for training apprentices. Additional challenges stem from the inflexible structure of curricula, the rigid organisation of the educational process and the lack of alignment between policies in key areas.

On this basis, a number of concrete and implementable proposals for improving the apprenticeship system were developed:

- Definition of apprenticeships as a national priority and the establishment of an “alliance for apprenticeships”.
- Strengthening interdepartmental cooperation: the Ministry of Education as the initiator of dialogue and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities as a key partner on account of its role in occupational standards and on the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training (SSPSI).
- Preserving the fundamental characteristics of the system while strengthening a participatory model of cooperation in which the education ministry assumes a coordinating role within an ongoing dialogue with other stakeholders.
- Strengthening the role of social partners on the SSPSI and on sectoral committees for occupational standards.
- Enhancing the competences of members of the SSPSI, including their experience, professional expertise and institutional support.
- Encouraging employers to become more actively involved in chambers, which are able to provide more diverse and systematic forms of support.
- Introducing a tripartite apprenticeship model involving B2B training centres as providers of practical training in the form of work-based learning (WBL).
- Greater flexibility in the organisation and definition of WBL periods.

During the evaluation process, these proposals were recognised by stakeholders as acceptable. They are concrete, well-founded and feasible, yet for the time being remain at the level of recommendations. Their implementation will require a clear political commitment at the highest level and the proactive engagement of the leading institutions.

Activities and key objectives of the project

The Modernisation of Vocational Education project is delivering a comprehensive modernisation of vocational and technical education and short-cycle higher vocational education in Slovenia, with the aim of supporting the digital and green transitions, strengthening links with the labour market and increasing the adaptability and resilience of the education system.

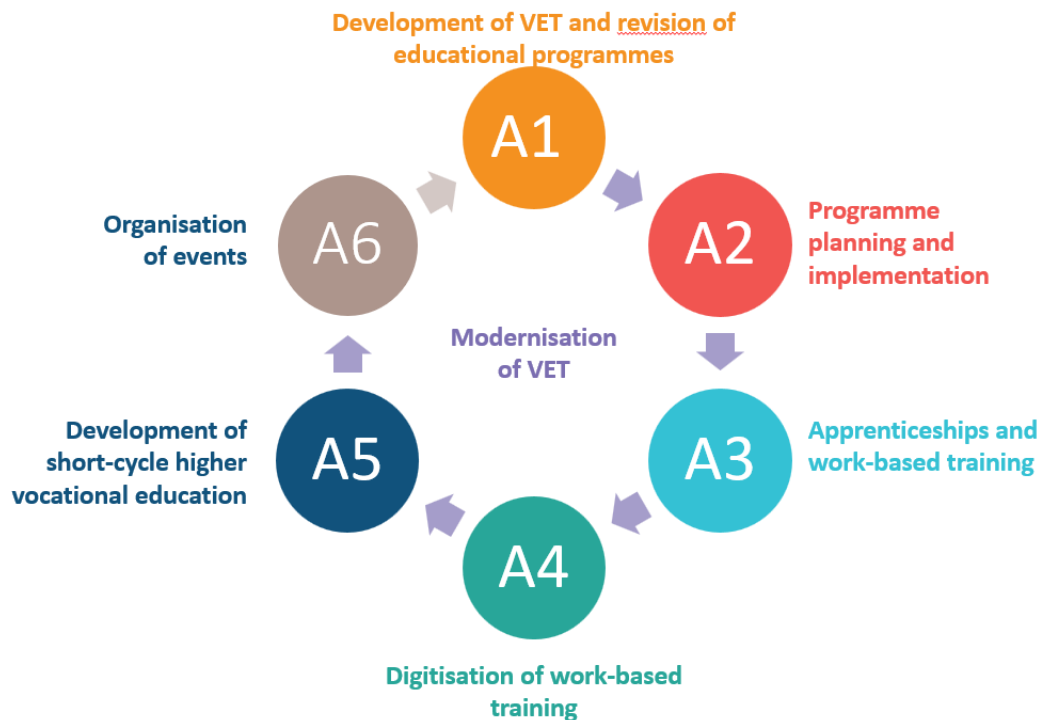
The project comprises five substantive activities and one organisational activity, which together ensure a comprehensive approach to modernising the education system. The activities encompass the development and revision of education programmes and short-cycle higher vocational education programmes, support for school leaders and education professionals in the high-quality delivery of programmes, the further development of apprenticeships and work-based learning, and the digitalisation of work-based learning.

Project activities are aimed at achieving the following key objectives:

- Modernisation and development of vocational and technical education programmes and short-cycle higher vocational education programmes to support competences relevant to the digital and green transitions
- Development of modern pedagogical and organisational models for the high-quality delivery of education programmes
- Strengthening of cooperation between schools and employers and establishment of a support system for work-based learning

The project was implemented from 1 June 2022 to 30 June 2026.. During this period, significant results were achieved, including the revision of 25 upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes and 16 short-cycle higher vocational education programmes.

The following sections present the individual project activities, their purpose, objectives and the materials developed, illustrating how the project makes a significant contribution to the development of vocational education and training in Slovenia across a range of development areas.



Key objectives of the project by activity:

Development of vocational and technical education and revision of education programmes

- Defining the future development of vocational and technical education with a view to strengthening its links with the labour market
- **Revision** of upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes to support the digital and green transitions

Programme planning and implementation

- Development of a teaching and learning model for the modern vocational and technical school that responds to changes in the labour market and society (sustainability competences, digitalisation, globalisation) and to the needs and expectations of students (communication, individualisation, inclusion, access to knowledge)
- Establishment of a training system for directors, head teachers, teachers and other education professionals to support the implementation of the developed teaching and learning model

Apprenticeships and work-based learning

- Evaluation of the existing apprenticeship system in Slovenia, evaluation of the verification of training places, preparation of proposals for further development, and examination of the possibilities for introducing apprenticeships into secondary technical education and short-cycle higher vocational education, including adult education
- Methodological support for workplace mentors in the delivery of practical training

Digitalisation of work-based learning

- Digital transformation of documentation for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL
- Development of a comprehensive tool (application) for a digitally supported model of planning, delivery and evaluation in relation to WBL that supports co-operation among students, schools, employers and other social partners
- Preparation of handbooks for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL

Development of short-cycle higher vocational education

- Revision of short-cycle higher vocational education programmes to support the green and digital transitions
- Support for education professionals in vocational colleges to enable them to respond to challenges associated with changes in the labour market and new approaches to teaching and learning

Organisation of events

- Organisation of public specialist discussions, consultations and thematic conferences

Development of vocational and technical education and revision of education programmes

This activity provided an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the vocational and technical education system. It focused on developing a modern approach to the design of upper secondary vocational education programmes and on developing the background documentation for their modernisation from a competence-based perspective, with an emphasis on the digital and green transitions.

Objectives of the activity

- Defining the future development of vocational and technical education with a view to strengthening its links with the labour market
- Revision of upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes to support the digital and green transitions

The results of the activity include studies, conceptual documents, and background and methodological documents supporting the revision of upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes.

The following section presents the studies and background materials developed under each of the activity's objectives.

- **Defining the future development of vocational and technical education with a view to strengthening its links with the labour market**

Comparative study of VET systems in selected EU countries

The purpose of the study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of systemic arrangements, challenges and approaches to the development of vocational education and training in selected countries and to place the findings in the Slovenian context. The study examined VET systems in the following countries: Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Croatia and Portugal. The outputs of the study include a synthesis report and individual country reports for each of the selected countries, providing an important basis for the further development of the vocational education and training system in Slovenia.

Pilot study in selected sectors

The study was carried out in the cultural and creative sector and in agriculture and horticulture. Its purpose was to identify current and future needs for occupations, knowledge and competences and to identify gaps in occupational standards. On this basis, recommendations were developed for improving education programmes, training and national vocational qualifications in the light of anticipated developments over the next five to ten years. The outputs of the study include a synthesis report on the feasibility of the sectoral analysis and synthesis reports on the agricultural and cultural and creative sectors.

Vocational pedagogy

The background material addresses systemic and conceptual issues in vocational and technical education and its place within the wider education system. Particular attention is given to the characteristics of governance in vocational and technical education, didactic concepts and approaches to teaching in vocational education.

Framework of key competences in upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes

The document provides a common professional and methodological framework for the systematic integration of key competences (digital competences; competences for sustainability; entrepreneurship and financial literacy; learning to learn, holistic health and well-being; language, citizenship, culture and the arts; career planning and management) into upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes. It is intended for education programme designers and teaching staff and supports both programme revision and its implementation in practice.

- ***Revision of vocational and technical education programmes***

The reform of upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes was based on clearly defined conceptual foundations. The process included an **analysis** of the 2019 ***Guidelines for the development of lower and upper secondary vocational education programmes and upper secondary technical education programmes*** in order to assess their suitability in relation to the challenges facing modern vocational education, particularly in the context of the digital and green transitions.

On the basis of the findings of the analysis, a **concept for the revision of the guidelines** was prepared, defining the role of vocational and technical education, the key challenges facing the system and the principles of modernisation. It also sets out

the objectives and directions for the revision of education programmes.

On this basis, revised ***Guidelines for the development of lower and upper secondary vocational education programmes and upper secondary technical education programmes*** were prepared and adopted by the SSPSI at its 205th meeting on 22 March 2024. The document now serves as a unified and updated framework for the planning and modernisation of vocational and technical education programmes in Slovenia.

As part of the project, ***25 upper secondary vocational and technical education programmes*** were revised, including five pilot programmes: Mechatronics Operator and Nursing Assistant/Carer (upper secondary vocational education), Mechatronics Technician and Pharmaceutical Technician (upper secondary technical education), and Mechatronics Technician (vocational-technical education). The remaining twenty programmes under revision cover a range of educational pathways. In upper secondary vocational education, these are Florist, Gastronomy and Hotel Services, Butcher, Joiner, Baker, Pastry Chef, Upholsterer and Gardener. In upper secondary technical education, they are Display Design Technician, Business and Administration Technician, Photographic Technician, Gastronomy and Tourism, Horticultural Technician, Wood Technology Technician, Media Technician, Environmental Protection Technician, Preschool Education and Optical Technician. In vocational-technical education, the programmes are Gastronomy, Horticultural Technician, Wood Technology Technician and Logistics Technician.

Use the QR code to access the materials.



Quality of programme planning and implementation in upper secondary vocational and technical education at provider level

The activity focused on developing a model of learning and teaching in the modern vocational school and preparing background and methodological materials to support teachers and other education professionals in the effective planning and delivery of competence-based education programmes. The model is based on the planning of the operational curriculum at school level and includes guidelines for its delivery. Another important component of the activity was the establishment of a training system for management and professional staff to support the introduction of competence-based education and the effective delivery of education programmes.

Objectives of the activity

- Development of a model of learning and teaching in the modern vocational and technical school that responds to changes in the labour market and society (sustainability competences, digitalisation, globalisation) as well as to the needs and expectations of students (communication, individualisation, inclusion, access to knowledge)
- Establishment of a training system for directors, head teachers, teachers and other professional staff that supports the developed learning and teaching model

The results of the activity are background and methodological materials and a training model that support the effective planning and delivery of competence-based education programmes in vocational and technical education.

The following section presents the key contents of the activity and the background and methodological materials developed under each of its objectives

- **Development of a model of learning and teaching in the modern vocational and technical school that responds to changes in the labour market and society (sustainability competences, digitalisation, globalisation) as well as to the needs and expectations of students (communication, individualisation, inclusion, access to knowledge)**

Planning and delivery of competence-based programmes in vocational and technical education

The methodological handbook addresses the key elements involved in introducing competence-based programmes in vocational and technical education. It places the competence-based education programme at the centre as the starting point for operational curriculum planning at school level and for teaching based on learning situations as the central didactic approach in competence-based education.

Analysis of the open curriculum and Guidelines for planning the open curriculum in lower and upper secondary vocational education and upper secondary technical education programmes

The analysis reviewed current practice in the planning and implementation of the open curriculum. On this basis, guidelines were developed defining the purpose and role of the open curriculum and the process for its planning, design, approval, publication and quality assurance. The guidelines also support schools in the development of open curriculum modules and the associated catalogues of knowledge.

Guidelines for the development of the operational curriculum

The publication provides schools with background materials to support the development of the operational curriculum as the document through which the national education programme is translated into concrete content, teaching approaches and organisational arrangements at school level. It promotes interdisciplinary integration, the planning of learning situations and the coordinated planning of programme delivery.

Guidelines for planning and conducting final assessments in vocational and technical education

This set of guidelines provides schools with a framework for planning, preparing and conducting final assessments, including the **second subject of the vocational matura**, the **fourth subject of the vocational matura**, and the **final examination consisting of a product or service with an oral defence**. It supports consistent, transparent and competence-based assessment of the achievement of programme objectives.

Supporting materials for planning learning situations

The materials support schools in planning and implementing learning situations as the central didactic approach in competence-based education and promote integrated curriculum planning at school and teacher level.

Supporting materials for knowledge testing and assessment and Example of assessment in competence-based education

These materials focus on knowledge testing and assessment in vocational and technical education and provide teachers with a framework for their implementation that is based on theoretical and conceptual foundations, the formal legal framework and the key principles of high-quality knowledge testing and assessment.

- **Establishment of a training system for directors, head teachers, teachers and other professional staff that supports the developed learning and teaching model**

As part of the development of a pilot training model for management and professional staff in vocational and technical education, we developed a training model designed to support programme providers and school management in the effective planning and delivery of competence-based education programmes. The final output is the ***Handbook for the implementation of revised programmes in upper secondary vocational and technical education***, which includes practical examples of programme planning and delivery.

Use the QR code to access the materials.



Apprenticeships and practical training in enterprises

This activity builds on the findings of the pilot implementation of apprenticeships in Slovenia between 2017 and 2021, which identified a range of implementation challenges, particularly at system level and in the operation of social partnership arrangements. The purpose of the activity was to assess the suitability of the existing apprenticeship framework and to examine whether, and under what conditions, apprenticeships can be implemented in upper secondary technical education, short-cycle higher vocational education and adult education. The activity also focused on exploring mechanisms that could contribute to stronger links between schools and enterprises and to the development of a support system for the delivery of practical training in enterprises.

Objectives of the activity

- Evaluation of the existing apprenticeship system in Slovenia, evaluation of the verification of training places, preparation of proposals for its further development, and examination of the possibilities for introducing apprenticeships in upper secondary technical education, short-cycle higher vocational education and adult education
- Methodological support for workplace mentors in the delivery of practical training

The results of the activity are analyses, evaluations and background materials that contribute to the further development of the apprenticeship system and the strengthening of cooperation between schools and enterprises.

The following section presents the results of the evaluations and the background materials developed under each of the activity's objectives.

- **Evaluation of the existing apprenticeship system in Slovenia, evaluation of the verification of training places, preparation of proposals for further development of the system, and examination of the possibilities for introducing apprenticeships in upper secondary technical education,**

short-cycle higher vocational education and adult education

Evaluation of the existing apprenticeship system

The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the implementation of social partnership in Slovenia, identify the strengths and challenges of the apprenticeship system, and develop recommendations for its further development. The evaluation resulted in the synthesis report “Implementing social partnership” and three individual reports that serve as background material for improving the systemic functioning of apprenticeships and supporting dialogue between the social partners.

Feasibility study on the introduction of apprenticeships in upper secondary technical education, short-cycle higher vocational education and adult education

The study explored the possibilities for introducing apprenticeships in upper secondary technical education, short-cycle higher vocational education and adult education, assessing the conditions, needs and constraints at each level of education. The study resulted in a synthesis report and four individual reports that serve as background material for decisions on the feasibility and conditions for extending apprenticeships to these levels of education.

Evaluation of the quality of training places for practical training in the form of work-based learning (WBL)

The evaluation assessed the existing system for the verification of training places for practical training in the form of work-based learning and developed proposals for its improvement. The evaluation resulted in a synthesis report and three individual reports that serve as background material for the proposals developed for updating the verification of training places.

- **Methodological support for workplace mentors in the delivery of practical training**

Evaluation of the revised mentor training programme and supporting materials

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the suitability and relevance of the revised mentor training programme and the associated supporting materials. The evaluation resulted in a synthesis report and four individual reports that served as background documentation for the preparation of the *Guidelines for the preparation of the final assignment (practical training plan)*.

Guidelines for the preparation of the final assignment (practical training plan)

Together with the providers of mentor training, we sought to establish a common understanding of the elements to be included in the final assignment (practical training

plan) and the content to be covered under each element. The guidelines were piloted by the training providers as part of mentor training. In addition to the guidelines for preparing the final assignment, we prepared four sample practical training plans.

Example of preparation for the delivery of mentor training based on the preparation of the final assignment (practical training plan) The purpose of the activity was to connect theory and practice by enabling trainers, during the training itself, to help participants (mentors) make sense of the knowledge they had acquired and apply it in the preparation of the final assignment.

Model of didactic and methodological support for the delivery of practical training in the form of work-based learning

The purpose of the material is to present practical training in the form of work-based learning as an important source of learning. It is based on work tasks as the primary source of learning and describes the circumstances and conditions that enable the transformation of the workplace into a stimulating learning environment in which work and learning processes are integrated and support the planned and reflective acquisition of knowledge, skills and vocational competences.

Programme and supporting materials for the further training of mentors: Practical training in the form of work-based learning for students with special educational needs

The purpose of the programme and supporting materials is to expand the range of continuing training opportunities available to mentors. The programme and supporting materials will provide specialist support for mentors working with students with special educational needs.

Use the QR code to access the materials.



Digitalisation of practical training in the form of work-based learning in healthcare, social care and preschool education

The purpose of the activity is to develop an application for the digital exchange of data and to establish a structured, digitally supported model of practical training in the form of work-based learning (WBL), enabling more transparent and efficient cooperation between students, schools and employers in the fields of nursing and social care and preschool education. As part of the activity, the key documentation for the planning and delivery of WBL was standardised, while operational learning objectives and evaluation questions were clearly defined.

Objectives of the activity

- Digital transformation of documentation for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL
- Development of a comprehensive tool (application) for a digitally supported model of planning, delivery and evaluation in relation to WBL that supports cooperation among students, schools, employers and other social partners
- Preparation of handbooks for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL

The results of the activity are standardised documentation for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL and an e-WBL digital tool that enables a more consistent and transparent approach to the delivery of WBL.

The following section presents the key contents and background materials developed under each of the activity's objectives.

- **Digital transformation of documentation for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL**

Documentation and procedures for the planning and delivery of WBL were standardised. Standard forms were developed for planning WBL (notification, agreement, annex and placement form), together with a methodology for defining operational learning objectives used for the monitoring and evaluation of WBL. The result of the activity is a unified set of documentation and methodological guidelines enabling a more systematic approach to the planning and delivery of WBL within the education programme.

To improve the transparency and quality of WBL and establish a basis for quality monitoring and the further improvement of WBL delivery, indicators with evaluation questions were developed, along with a template for preparing reports on student achievement during WBL, ensuring a more systematic collection of data on the delivery of WBL.

Training places and links to operational learning objectives

The activity included the publication of training places for the Preschool Education and Nursing Care programmes in the **Central Register of Training Places**. The result of the activity is a transparent register of employers offering training places for the delivery of WBL within these education programmes.

- **Development of a comprehensive tool (application) for a digitally supported model of planning, delivery and evaluation in relation to WBL that supports cooperation among students, schools, employers and other social partners**

A digitally supported **model of practical training in the form of work-based learning** (WBL) was developed, defining the stages of planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of WBL and incorporating digital modules (training agreements, annexes, communication, documentation, evaluation and archiving).

The purpose of the model is to present a framework for the digitalisation of the processes involved in planning, delivering and evaluating WBL and to support the development of a comprehensive tool (application) for effective communication and cooperation between all stakeholders (students, schools and social partners). The model is based on the experience of WBL coordinators in the Preschool Education and Nursing Care programmes.

On the basis of the model, an **e-WBL application** was developed to support effective cooperation between all stakeholders and, in particular, digital documentation, communication, document management, monitoring of daily attendance records and work reports, and the evaluation of completed WBL. Testing of the application in selected schools enabled its functionality and user experience to be assessed and provided input for the development of background documentation to support its further enhancement. User guidance for the application was prepared in the form of video tutorials.

An evaluation of the **e-WBL application** was carried out to assess its effectiveness

and usability; the findings provide a basis for its further enhancement.

Preparation of handbooks for the planning, delivery and evaluation of WBL

Handbooks for the planning, delivery and evaluation of practical training in the form of work-based learning (WBL) were developed for **WBL coordinators and mentors** and **students** in upper secondary vocational and technical schools. They provide guidance for the planning, organisation, monitoring and documentation of WBL and include the key procedures, forms and information needed for the effective delivery of WBL and cooperation between schools and the workplace.

Use the QR code to access the materials.



Development of short-cycle higher vocational education

The activity focused on developing background materials for the revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes and supporting their effective planning and delivery in vocational colleges. The revision of the programmes also sought to strengthen links between education and the labour market and respond to changes in the occupational field, the economy and society.

Objectives of the activity

- Revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes to support the green and digital transitions
- Support for education professionals in vocational colleges to enable them to respond to challenges associated with changes in the labour market and new approaches to teaching and learning

The results of the activity are analyses, various background and methodological materials, and conceptual documents that support the revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes and the effective planning and delivery of short-cycle higher vocational education.

The following section presents the key contents and background materials developed under each of the activity's objectives.

- **Revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes to support the green and digital transitions**

The revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes was based on clearly defined conceptual and methodological foundations. The process began with a **system-wide analysis of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes**, which provided a comprehensive overview of the characteristics and challenges of short-cycle higher vocational education. The result of this analysis was a synthesis report that served as an important background document for the further development of the higher vocational education system. An **international comparison of EQF Level 5 qualifications** provided insights into the characteristics of education systems at EQF Level 5 in selected EU Member States. The comparative report made an important

contribution to discussions on revised guidelines for the development of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes by incorporating international trends. To ensure a sound evidence base and high-quality supporting materials for the upgrading and modernisation of the guidelines, an **analysis of the existing *Guidelines for the development of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes*** was also carried out. The findings enabled the preparation of a ***Model for the revision of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes***, with a focus on the integration of key competences and the introduction of a broader and more contemporary perspective on higher vocational education. These documents formed the basis for the revised ***Guidelines for the development of short-cycle higher vocational study programmes***, which were adopted by the SSPSI at its 211th meeting on 18 April 2025. Preparation of a document entitled ***Concept for the integration of key competences into short-cycle higher vocational study programmes*** also involved adapting the concept of key competences used in upper secondary vocational and technical education for the higher vocational level. The document established a comprehensive approach to the planning, monitoring and assessment of key competences within study programmes and to encouraging cooperation among all key stakeholders in their integration into the educational process. Catalogues were also prepared for four **common subjects**: Business Communication and Leadership, Communication in a Foreign Language, Computer and Information Science, and Economics and Entrepreneurship. Their purpose is to ensure that specialised knowledge is translated into effective workplace performance and employability.

As part of the project, the following **16 short-cycle higher vocational study programmes** in various fields were revised on the basis of the activities described above: Automotive Service Management, Ballet, Economics, Electrical Power Engineering, Photography, Horticulture, Cosmetics, Wood Technology, Logistics Engineering, Media Production, Mechatronics, Visual Communications and Marketing Design, Mechanical Engineering, Telecommunications, Dental Hygienist and Wellness.

- **Support for education professionals in vocational colleges to enable them to respond to challenges associated with changes in the labour market and new approaches to teaching and learning**

Guidelines for planning the open curriculum in short-cycle higher vocational study programmes

The purpose of the **guidelines** is to support vocational colleges in the effective development of the open curriculum, enabling study programmes to respond more flexibly to the needs of the labour market and local environment and strengthening cooperation with employers. Intended primarily for colleges, the document provides guidance on the preparation of catalogues of knowledge for open curriculum modules, the definition of occupational competences and learning objectives, and the development of appropriate delivery formats and learning resources.

Guidelines for planning and delivering competence-based short-cycle higher vocational education

The publication sets out guidelines for the planning and delivery of competence-based short-cycle higher vocational education. It emphasises a holistic approach to planning the study process, defines the active role of leadership and the involvement of all stakeholders, and promotes the development of pedagogical and didactic approaches that strengthen the link between theory and practice and enhance the quality of the learning experience.

Handbook for head teachers and lecturers

The purpose of the handbook is to support workplace mentors and coordinators of practical education in colleges in the planning, delivery and evaluation of practical education in short-cycle higher vocational education.

Use the QR code to access the materials.



Event management

During the project we organised three thematic conferences and a final project conference for the wider professional community. Shaped around the findings and insights emerging from different phases of the project, the thematic conferences provided a forum for the professional community to exchange views, engage in discussion and consider different perspectives and experiences. We also held discussions and numerous workshops and prepared reference materials that were made available to the general public. All events were carefully targeted, with a focus on project activities designed to address the broadest aspects of vocational education and training at all levels.

The first thematic conference, entitled “**Digital and green don’t just fall from the sky**”, was held in November 2023 and focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital and green transitions and on how these changes can be integrated into vocational education and training.

The second thematic conference, entitled “**Competence-oriented learning and teaching: vision or illusion?**”, took place in November 2024. The discussion explored how the revised programmes can be implemented in practice and what a competence-based approach means for everyday teaching.

The third thematic conference, entitled “**Leading changes, shaping the future: planning and implementing competence-based VET**”, was held in October 2025 and focused on the role of school leadership in introducing the revised programmes.

The final conference, entitled “**Presentation of achievements and a look ahead**”, was held in April 2026 and brought together the experiences gained throughout the project. It was dedicated to presenting the project’s achievements in supporting the development of vocational education and training and contributing to the empowerment of students and other participants in education. Through these activities, participants acquired and strengthened the competences needed to enter the labour market, pursue further education, engage in lifelong learning and adapt and respond to the challenges of the modern world. The conference also provided an opportunity to exchange views and reflect on how the achievements of the project can be further developed and sustained beyond its conclusion.

From development to implementation of revised programmes

The Modernisation of Vocational Education project supported development work in the field of vocational education and training in Slovenia during the period 2022–2026. It produced numerous studies, analyses, conceptual documents, background and methodological materials, guidelines, handbooks and other reference materials that provide significant support for the revision of education programmes and short-cycle higher vocational study programmes and for their implementation in practice.

These materials together form a comprehensive framework for the further development of the vocational education and training system in Slovenia. They support competence-based programme design, modern approaches to learning and teaching, closer links between education and the workplace, and the development of digitally supported forms of work-based learning.

Another important part of the project was the revision of education programmes, which was based on these background materials. The development of programmes and supporting materials therefore represents the first step towards putting the revised programmes into practice. One of the key challenges in the coming period will be ensuring the effective transfer of the revised programmes and approaches to schools and colleges and their sustainable integration into educational practice. This will require continued support for school leadership, teachers and other education professionals, encouragement of cooperation with employers, and the creation of conditions that enable the gradual, carefully planned and well-supported introduction of change.

The project is not merely the culmination of a period of development; above all, it provides an important starting point for the further development of vocational education and training in Slovenia.

